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MARK WEBBER Q&A

THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT

MOTORSPORT NEWS

■ JUNE 3 2021 ■ EVERY THURSDAY ■ £3.99 ■ FORMERLY MOTORING NEWS

Aussie Grit tackles another tough opponent: the MN readers' questions p14

Spectators watch on for first time in 2021 and operators look forward to further restriction easing

FAN RETURN TO ENGLISH CIRCUITS DECLARED A SUCCESS

Fans watch the British Rally Championship at Oulton Park

By Graham Keilloh

UK motorsport operators have branded the recent return of spectators to national racing and rallying events a success and now look ahead to remaining Covid restrictions being eased.

Thousands of fans flocked to the opening round of the British Rally Championship, which took place at Oulton Park on Monday. Race events opened their gates 10 days ago when fans were welcomed back for the first time in 2021, with the line-up led by Brands Hatch's British GT championship season-opener.

The remaining Covid restrictions on English attendances are due to be lifted on June 21.

Circuit operator MotorSport Vision told Motorsport News: "It's been brilliant having fans trackside again – there was a superb atmosphere and we hope to welcome many more people as the summer progresses."

Full story, p7

THE VOICE OF BRITISH MOTORSPORT MOTORSPORT NEWS

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COMMENT

Photo: Motorsport Images, 5 Nations Rallycross

Not all races in 2021 will have the same value, and that is something that needs thought

MAKING THE PICTURE CLEAR

The guest in the hot seat of the Motorsport News readers' questions this week is Mark Webber, a man who's been there and done that in Formula 1. Now, fans get to benefit from his opinions as one of the pundits on Channel 4's coverage and he is a man generally acknowledged to provide a lot of straight-talking sense.

So when he was asked about the idea of the new F1 Sprint qualifying format (a sprint race in normal language) by one of our readers, his opinions are worth listening to. He makes a point: explaining what the reasons and the purpose of the Sprint qualifying is to the viewers, and its importance in the overall scheme of a Formula 1 weekend, is something that skilful broadcasters are going to have to be able to do.

But he makes another point. Shorter events can sometimes throw up results that would not normally be seen in a longer race. A driver who is perhaps less talented is able to concentrate over a shorter period of time. They would, naturally, be caught out in a longer full-scale grand prix where the cream would rise to the top. But, the 65-mile format of the Saturday sprints might throw a few spanners in the works. It's a fair point and one which is, in our view, another reason why Formula 1 has to be very careful that it doesn't go down a slippery slope of artificial results that will take away the kudos of success in grand prix motor racing.

Talking of kudos, the Safari Rally name returns to the World Rally Championship later this month. Graham Lister looks at the event. Although it is a shadow of the mammoth event it used to be, the unique challenges of rallying on the African continent will be something that none of the top-flight drivers will have experienced before. It is an exciting chapter that is about to be reopened, and just the sort of challenge that anyone claiming to be the World Rally champion should have to tackle.

Elsewhere in MN this week, Paul Lawrence catches up with team boss and born-again racing driver Shaun Hollamby, who has taken to the circuits once more in his father's old racer. Harry King also provides us with an insight into his new Porsche campaign and reflects on his experiences on the streets of Monaco recently.

● Due to the production deadlines of Motorsport News, the report from Oulton Park of the opening round of this year's British Rally Championship and the latest Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship round, which concluded on Monday afternoon, is not included in this week's MN. Full analysis of the events will be in next week's edition.

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MOTORSPORT NEWS

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RACING NEWS

IN BRIEF

F1 mulls Indy rule
The FIA is to look at whether IndyCar's rule for deleting lap times from drivers causing qualifying red flags is suitable for Formula 1 after Charles Leclerc's Monaco pole position was cemented by his late-session crash. In series such as IndyCar and IMSA any driver causing a qualifying stoppage loses their fastest times.

Two-day pitstop
Mercedes published a video of the team at last removing Valtteri Bottas's stuck right-front wheel two days after its refusal to budge forced the Finn to retire from the Monaco Grand Prix. Bottas was unable to complete his routine in-race pitstop as the wheelnut was stripped by the airgun.

Covid drive-in
Garages at Formula 1's Canadian Grand Prix Circuit Gilles Villeneuve venue in Montreal were used from last weekend for a drive-in Covid vaccination service. The service on its first weekend was for people on bicycles and for the next two weekends will be open to those in cars. Authorities aim to administer 6000 vaccines there.

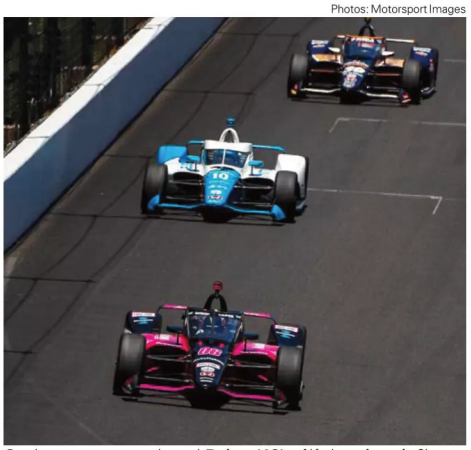
Hill and Herbert show
Formula 1's 1996 champion Damon Hill and race-winner Johnny Herbert are to star in an 'in conversation with' evening show, called 'The Inside Track', in London next month during the build up to the British Grand Prix. The event takes place at Cadogan Hall in Sloane Square on July 14.

W Series TV deal
W Series will continue to be shown live and free-to-air on Channel 4 this season. The all-female category's races were shown on Channel 4 during its inaugural 2019 campaign, and it now returns as a Formula 1 support category after missing a year due to Covid. Its Red Bull Ring season-opener is on June 26.

D'Hondt suspended
NASCAR has issued an indefinite suspension to Eddie D'Hondt, spotter for the reigning champion Chase Elliott, after details surfaced of D'Hondt's arrest last month suspected of battery of an unborn child and assault on a female. D'Hondt's Hendrick Motorsports team also suspended him. Elliott picked cousin Trey Poole to perform spotter duties at Charlotte last weekend.

Castroneves joined Indy's elite four-time winner club

Photos: Motorsport Images


Castroneves swept past Palou (10) with two laps left

CASTRONEVES MAKES HISTORY WITH FOURTH INDY 500 WIN

Brazilian aged 46 with part-time entry becomes only fourth to take Brickyard quadruple

By Graham Keilloh

Helio Castroneves has entered the Indianapolis 500's pantheon by last Sunday taking his fourth victory in the famous race, becoming only the fourth to reach that total.

The 46-year-old, competing for Meyer Shank Racing in a part-time entry as one of the oldest drivers in the field, in a thrilling race made his decisive move for the lead with two laps to go, sweeping by Ganassi's Alex Palou.

Castroneves therefore joins AJ Foyt, Al Unser Sr and Rick Mears as the only four-time winners of the US single-seater blue-riband event. The Brazilian's first Indy 500 win was two decades ago in 2001 while his most recent previous triumph was in 2009.

It also was the Meyer Shank team's first-ever IndyCar win, and Castroneves's first Indy 500 victory not with Team Penske.

His latest win sparked sensational celebration scenes from Castroneves on the pitstraight – in front of the 135,000 fans – alongside team members, rivals and US racing legend Mario Andretti. Castroneves also completed his trademark 'Spider-Man' celebration, climbing up the debris fence.

"This stage is absolutely incredible, I love Indianapolis! The fans give me energy!," said the elated winner. "Tom Brady won the Super Bowl, Phil Mickelson won the [US PGA golf], so the older guys are still kicking the young guys' butt!"

The second half of the race was characterised by a captivating three-way battle for first between Castroneves, Palou and Arrow McLaren SP's Pato O'Ward. This followed a mid-race caution period caused by a major smash for Graham Rahal when his left-rear wheel detached exiting the pits. Rahal, with strong pace and fuel mileage, had looked a victory contender. He ruefully commented that "we had them today, we should have [won]".

Poleman and six-time IndyCar champion Scott Dixon was another hard-luck story, when he lost a lap early on as under a safety car he ran out of fuel as he pitted for an emergency top-up, and his car then wouldn't fire up until it had cooled. Dixon finished 17th.

Results
1 Helio Castroneves (Meyer Shank Racing) 2h37m19.3846s; 2 Alex Palou (Chip Ganassi Racing) +0.4928s; 3 Simon Pagenaud (Team Penske); 4 Patricio O'Ward (Arrow McLaren SP); 5 Ed Carpenter (Ed Carpenter Racing); 6 Santino Ferrucci (Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing); 7 Sage Karam (Dreyer & Reinbold Racing); 8 Rinus Van Kalmthout (Ed Carpenter Racing); 9 Juan Pablo Montoya (Arrow McLaren SP); 10 Tony Kanaan (Chip Ganassi Racing). **Championship:** 1 Palou 248; 2 Scott Dixon 212; 3 O'Ward 211; 4 Pagenaud 201; 5 Van Kalmthout 191; 6 Josef Newgarden 184.

STOKER LAUNCHES FIA PRESIDENT BID ALONGSIDE KRISTENSEN

The FIA's deputy president for sport Graham Stoker will stand for election as FIA president later this year on a ticket alongside Le Mans legend Tom Kristensen.

British barrister Stoker has since 2012 worked alongside incumbent president Jean Todt, whose mandate ends this year. Stoker also is a former president of the Motor Sports Association and has been an FIA World Motor Sport Council member since 2004. He is standing under an 'FIA for All' banner.

Nine-time Le Mans winner Kristensen, who took over as president of the FIA's drivers' commission at the start of 2016, is standing for deputy president for sport as part of Stoker's leadership team.

The election is due to take place in December, with the only other confirmed candidate so far being former rally driver Mohammed bin Sulayem.

Speaking at his election bid launch, Stoker said: "I want the FIA and our member clubs to gain global influence across all aspects of sport and mobility, emerging transport and energy trends. We will build on the outstanding work of president Jean Todt over the last 12 years and are proud to have been able to help introduce many new innovative programmes and resources to support members."

Stoker (left) aims to be next FIA president with Kristensen's help

Ferrari has got to bottom of non-start

LECLERC'S MONACO NON-START DUE TO CRACKED WHEEL HUB

Ferrari has discovered that the problem stopping Charles Leclerc taking up his Monaco Grand Prix pole position stemmed from a cracked left-rear wheel hub sustained in his qualifying accident.

The crack was on the opposite side of the Ferrari from where Leclerc made impact with the wall and was not visible in the garage for the checks made to the car before the Monegasque attempted to start the race.

Leclerc's Ferrari appeared fine when it took to the track for its pre-race installation lap, but when Leclerc tried to accelerate from the hairpin the hub failed and in so doing damaged the driveshaft, leaving the car with no left-hand-side drive. Ferrari will as a result of this case be reviewing its procedures.

It was initially unclear if the driveshaft problem was related to the qualifying crash as it was on the opposite side of the car from were Leclerc hit the barriers.

SIX CHAMPIONS IN WTCR'S ALL-STAR 2021 LINE-UP SET FOR NORDSCHLEIFE

Six FIA World champions are on the World Touring Car Cup's 22-strong driver line-up for its 2021 season opener this weekend at the legendary Nurburgring Nordschleife.

Four-time World Touring Car champion Yvan Muller, his nephew reigning WTCR champion Yann Ehrlacher, multiple tin-top champion Gabriele Tarquini and returning 2012 WTCC champion Rob Huff are among those competing in the revered 14-mile circuit's double-header this Saturday.

The entry also includes five car brands – Audi, Cupra, Honda, Hyundai and Lynk & Co – 11 teams and 12 nationalities as well as nine drivers aged 25 or under. A total of 63 race wins are shared by the line-up.

The 2021 WTCR itinerary includes 16 races across eight rounds, with five meetings in Europe followed by a three-round Asian leg in the Autumn.

TRIBUTES PAID TO FORMER FIA PRESIDENT MAX MOSLEY

A colossal yet contentious motorsport figure, who headed major safety advances on the track and road, is remembered

By Graham Keilloh

Tributes have been paid to former FIA president Max Mosley, a towering and controversial figure over several decades in motorsport, whose death aged 81 after suffering from cancer was announced last week as Motorsport News went to press.

Mosley served as FIA president from 1993 to 2009 and was closely associated with safety advances in motorsport – particularly following Roland Ratzenberger's and Ayrton Senna's deaths at Imola in 1994 – and in road cars. He also oversaw F1 cost-saving measures but also was embroiled in controversies, such as the notorious six-car 2005 United States Grand Prix, 2007's McLaren 'spy-gate' scandal, and a threatened breakaway championship among major F1 teams and manufacturers in 2009.

Mosley was born in 1940, the son of Sir Oswald Mosley, leader of the British Union of Fascists, and Lady Diana Mosley, one of the famous Mitford sisters.

Max had success as a barrister, then reached Formula 2 as a racing driver before in 1969 becoming co-founder of March Engineering. He later was a close ally and legal advisor to Bernie Ecclestone and his increasingly influential Formula One Constructors' Association (FOCA), including during its notorious 'war' with FISA – then the FIA's sporting arm – over control of F1.

Mosley became an Ecclestone ally

Mosley headed the FIA for 16 years

Mosley also helped frame F1's original Concorde Agreement.

After a spell working for the Conservative Party, Mosley in 1986 was elected president of FISA's manufacturers' commission, then in 1991 was elected FISA president, defeating incumbent Jean-Marie Balestre. Mosley was elected FIA president two years later amid a governing body restructure.

In 2008 he was the subject of a newspaper expose about his sex life, and won £60,000 in damages from the News of the World that had alleged incorrectly that his activities were Nazi themed. Mosley subsequently became a prominent campaigner for greater press regulation and a supporter of Fleet Street phone-hacking victims.

Tributes to Max Mosley

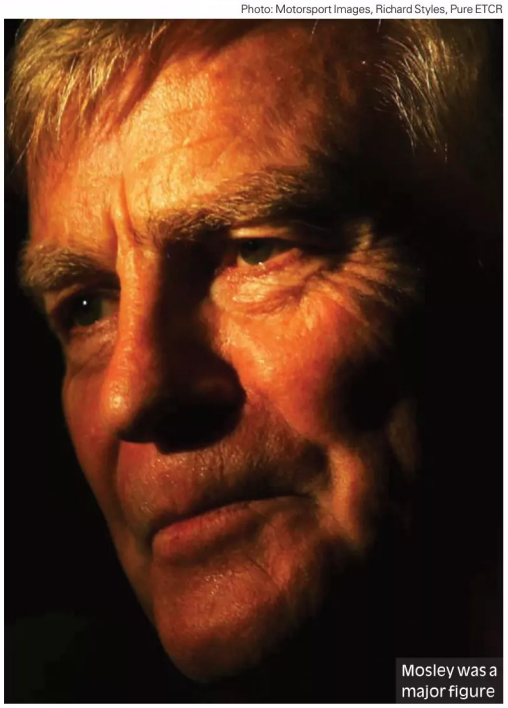
"It's like losing family, like losing a brother, Max and I. He did a lot of good things not just for motorsport, but also the [car] industry. He was very good in making sure people built cars that were safe." **Bernie Ecclestone**

"He was a major figure in F1 and motorsport. As FIA president for 16 years, he strongly contributed to reinforcing safety on track and on the roads. The entire FIA community pays tribute to him." **Jean Todt, FIA president**

"I don't think people realise just how much he did for motorsport and safety when FIA president. He was very good to my family and I when Roland [Ratzenberger] passed away." **David Brabham, Le Mans winner and F1 driver**

"Max was an incredibly strong character with the sharpest mind I have ever met. As drivers we owe him a debt of thanks for all he did in our sport especially his behind-the-scenes work on safety." **Allan McNish, three-time Le Mans winner**

Photo: Motorsport Images, Richard Styles, Pure ETCR



Mosley was a major figure

BRITCAR CONFIRMS PIT SAFETY CHANGES AFTER CLASH

Cars will now park at angle, among other changes

Britcar has confirmed safety changes following a pitlane collision in an Endurance race during last month's Snetterton round.

The championship's pitlane speed limit has been cut from 60kph to 40kph and pitting cars should be parked at approximately 45 degrees to the pitlane rather than parallel as before.

The numbers who can access the live pitlane is also reduced. Teams will be issued with six arm bands – three for mechanics, two for pitwall timing and one for the pitlane car controller – that personnel must wear visibly in order to access the pitlane.

Also team members, with the exception of the car controller, must remain in the garage behind the pitlane line or on the pitwall until the pitting car has come to a complete stop.

"It all went through very well, it's trying to follow what other international championships are doing and make sure it's safe," Britcar boss Claire Hedley told Motorsport News. The next round is at Oulton Park next weekend.

CHAMPION WEBB TO RACE IN NEW ELECTRIC TIN-TOP CONTEST

European Le Mans Series champion and World Endurance Championship LMP1 racer Oli Webb will compete in this season's inaugural Pure ETCR all-electric championship in a Romeo Ferraris Alfa Romeo Giulia.

The 30-year-old Briton will combine competition in WEC's LMP2, GT Cup and various historic categories in 2021 with the new tin-top contest that has a rallycross-style format. Webb has done a brief Vallelunga test in the Alfa and has European Rallycross experience.

"The main attraction is that [Pure ETCR] was attracting competitive well-accomplished drivers," Webb told Motorsport News. "You can race against some great people on a new playing field. Stefano Coletti is in our team, in Hyundai Jean-Karl Vernay who has done loads. Tom Chilton, Augusto Farfus, those names are going to be really exciting to race against.

"It's great to be in a new championship and hopefully at the start of something which just grows. We've can all see from other electric categories that if you're in there early it bodes well.

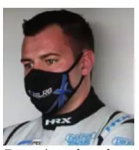
"[I'm] against very competitive drivers who have done lots more testing, I'm not expecting to set the world alight. [It would be great to] be a reliable pair of hands that hopefully by mid-season can be competing for podiums and wins."

Ace Webb wants to be "in there early" for new series

PROCTOR JOINS BTC RACING FOR REMAINDER OF 2021

Senna Proctor expects to be fighting for race wins from the start of his British Touring Car Championship return at Snetterton in the middle of June.

The 22-year-old joins the BTC Racing team and will line-up alongside double Thruxton winner Josh Cook plus Jade Edwards in the squad's Honda Civic FK8. The car was raced at the opening meeting by Dan Cammish, who will now concentrate on a programme in Porsche racing.



Proctor: back

Proctor, who won the rookie-based Jack Sears Trophy in 2017 and was a race winner at Brands Hatch at the start of 2018, will stay with the team for the remaining 27 races of 2021. His first outing will be at the next meeting of the BTCC at Snetterton on June 12-13.

He said: "The Honda Civic Type R FK8 is a proven race-winning car so this is a fantastic opportunity for me to show what I can do. The first time I will drive the car will be Free Practice one at Snetterton so I am in at the deep end, but it is a challenge I look forward to."

Boss Steve Dudman added: "Although still young, Senna has strong experience in the BTCC and is a proven winner. He knows how to get the job done."

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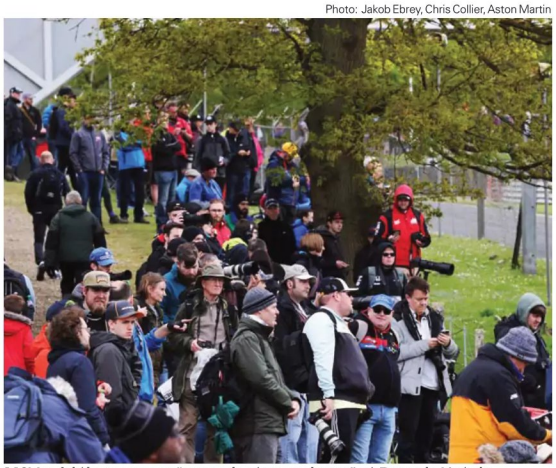
RACING NEWS

Photo: Jakob Ebrey, Chris Collier, Aston Martin

Fans returned at British GT event



MSV said there was a "superb atmosphere" at Brands Hatch

FANS WELCOMED BACK TO ENGLISH CIRCUITS

National racing operators have declared spectators' recent return a success and are looking ahead to full crowds' imminent comeback

By Graham Keilloh

National motorsport operators have said the recent return of spectators to racing events was a success and are keen for access restrictions to be eased further.

English circuits on the May 22-23 weekend welcomed spectators back for the first time since late 2020 after the latest easing of Covid restrictions. Unrestricted crowds are due to return from June 21.

Circuit operator MotorSport Vision, whose weekend line-up was headlined by British GT's Brands Hatch season-opener, told Motorsport News: "We're still working to very strict spectator limits but it's been brilliant having fans trackside again – there was a superb atmosphere at Brands Hatch and we hope to welcome many more people as the summer progresses."

Giles Groombridge, competitions manager of the 750 Motor Club that welcomed fans back at its Donington Park meeting, told MN: "We didn't have any issues at all. At least competitors can invite people to come along and support them.

"It's a nice welcome for the drivers to actually see some people on the banks for the first time in a while. It all feels positive at the moment.

"Part of the appeal with spectators in club racing is the [pit and paddock] access. It's a shame that we can't welcome them into the paddock yet. Hopefully in a month's time those restrictions will be lifted." Spectator tickets for last weekend's 750MC Croft meeting sold out in advance.

MSV however expressed frustration that motorsport events had to wait longer than some other attractions to readmit customers and still face tougher restrictions than stadium-based activities.

BRITISH GT CHAMPS GET TROPHIES AT LAST

British GT's 2020 title-winning driver crews and teams, plus those placing second and third in the various championship tables, finally got their hands on their silverware during the category's recent 2021 season opener at Brands Hatch. Covid restrictions stopped the British GT organiser SRO from staging its usual annual global awards evening before Christmas. GT3's reigning drivers' champions Sandy Mitchell and Rob Collard (l) plus Mark Lemmer (c), boss of reigning GT3 teams' champion Barwell Motorsport, were among those picking up new decorations for their mantelpieces.

SIMMONS HITCHES A RIDE WITH HORSTEN

Ayrton Simmons and Bart Horsten had a spectacular first-lap clash disputing the lead of BRDC British Formula 3's second race at its recent Brands Hatch season-opener.

Simmons' Chris Dittmann Racing car rode on top of Horsten's Hitech Grand Prix machine for a few seconds during the Druids incident, that caused both to retire from the race. The stewards in response handed Simmons a five-place grid penalty he'll serve later this month at Silverstone.

Simmons felt it was a racing incident. "It was pretty unfortunate," he told Motorsport News, "Bart broke super late, so did I, I was at a much tighter angle, so I tried to make the corner but it didn't quite happen. I'd say probably a bit of a racing incident. There's always things that drivers could have done to avoid [contact]."

Horsten however did not feel he shared blame. "I was happy with how I went through the corner," he told MN. "I was late on the brakes, left quite a bit of room on the inside, and then [Simmons] gets a bit out of shape and makes contact. Perhaps if the collision had happened on a different part of the car we would have just carried on on our merry way."

Simmons (18) takes a ride on the back of Horsten's car at Brands

IN BRIEF

Souch takes BRSCC role

The British Racing and Sports Car Club has appointed Luke Souch as its new competitions coordinator. Souch, who will start the role on July 1, has been a senior clerk of the course at BRSCC race weekends, acting race director for the Masters Endurance Legends race at Formula 1's French GP plus has competed in the BRSCC's Mazda MX-5 championship.

Beckett fundraiser

Formula Ford organiser James Beckett with the 'To Le Mans and Back' team is contesting a Thruxton endurance kart event in August to raise funds and awareness for motor neurone disease organisations, five years after team founder and racer Neil Cunningham lost his battle with MND. You can make a donation at: gofundme.com/f/to-le-mans-and-back-karting-4-mnd.

Morris podium

British GT champion Seb Morris took third place on his 24H Series debut in last month's Hockenheim 12 hours, the first race of his three-event Leipert Motorsport deal to drive its Lamborghini Huracan GT3. Morris overcame having greater ballast and lower fuel capacity than many of his rivals due to the Balance of Performance.

Equipe goes solo

The MG Car Club has confirmed that its regular support organiser Equipe Classic Racing will run its own race meetings next year. Equipe has several categories for '50s and '60s cars that have featured at MGCC's events over many years, often providing bumper grids. Equipe is to be present at all five MGCC race meetings in 2021.

Santa Pod

UK drag racing venue Santa Pod is set to herald the return of unlimited audiences next month with its Festival of Power Unlocked event taking place on June 25-27. The festival is traditionally held at Easter to launch the UK drag racing year.

Champion Canning to step in

RISING STAR CANNING TO BE GT CUP STAND IN

British GT champion Tom Canning will race for Feathers Motor Sport in selected GT Cup events this season when the team's regular Pro driver Darren Turner is unavailable.

Canning, a 19-year-old BRDC Rising Star from Somerset, was recommended for the seat by three-time Le Mans winner Turner, and will step in at Snetterton this weekend and at Donington Park in mid-September. He will race alongside James Guess in FMS's new Aston Martin Vantage GT4.

Canning is an Aston Martin Racing Academy winner and was the first driver to clinch a championship in the multiple title-winning Vantage GT4, taking British GT4's crown in 2019 with TF Sport. The FMS Vantage in 2021's GT Cup has taken two class victories and a second place from six starts, and Guess and Turner sit second in the Class H standings.

Team manager Simon Rose said: "He knows the Vantage GT4 extremely well which allows him to hit the ground running. We also feel that, just like Darren, he's an easy fit for our small family-focused but professional team."

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

RALLY NEWS

HYUNDAI BOSS BEGS DRIVERS TO LAND THE BIG RESULTS

Hyundai Motorsport head Andrea Adamo has told his drivers to win Rally Italy following the squad's Portugal implosion last month.

Thierry Neuville, Dani Sordo and Ott Tanak all could have won in Portugal but only Sordo completed the entire route as runner-up to Elfyn Evans.

Adamo said: "We have a clear target for victory in Sardinia, in an effort to make up the missed opportunities from Portugal.

"We showed in Portugal we have the pace, now we need a trouble-free weekend to confirm the results we know we can achieve. The championship is far from over, we have to dig deep and come back fighting."

Hyundai has a strong record in Sardinia with four wins in the last five years with Sordo unbeaten since 2019.

However, the Spaniard isn't counting on former glories even though he will start seventh on the road.

"This year it will be a difficult rally because we have some new parts and the rally location is in a new place," he said. "I will be starting further back so I will try to take advantage of this on day one to be in the fight."

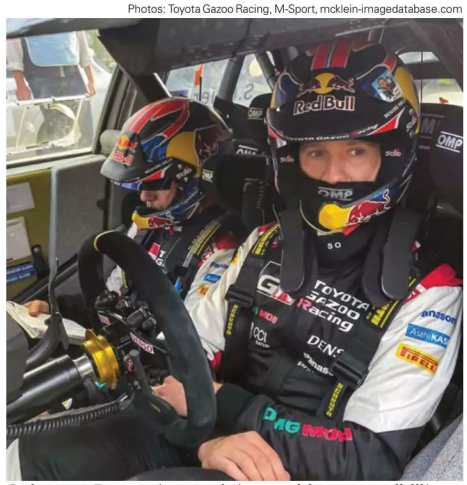
Adamo: desperate for win

ESSENTIALS

Rally Italy
June 3-6
WRC round 5/12
Base: Olbia, Sardinia
Surface: Gravel
Stages: 20
Distance: 188.33 miles

Ogier will be opening the road in Sardinia

Photos: Toyota Gazoo Racing, M-Sport, mcklein-imagedatabase.com



Ogier says Powerstage points are a big responsibility

CHAMPION OGIER: I'LL TAKE POINTS OVER BENEFICIAL ROAD POSITION

Frenchman not bothered by starting first – and ahead of Evans – in Italy this weekend

By Graham Lister

Sebastien Ogier has revealed the thought of backing off on Rally of Portugal's Powerstage to force his Toyota team-mate Elfyn Evans to open the road in Sardinia never crossed his mind.

Ogier scored three bonus points for going third fastest on the deciding stage in Portugal, where Welshman Evans landed his first victory of the World Rally Championship season.

The result kept Ogier on top of the standings by two points and means he will run first on the road when Rally Italy begins tomorrow (Friday).

While Ogier is a master at minimising time loss when running at the head of the pack, the Sardinia event's notoriously sandy surface and hard road base adversely affects those with higher starting positions.

But rather than hindering Evans, Ogier opted to play the team game in Portugal, as he explained.

"I was asked if I hadn't been tempted to go easy in the Powerstage in order to let Elfyn take the lead of the championship with Sardinia in mind," said Ogier. "But no, I haven't thought of it and I preferred to try and go for the additional points because I'm not accustomed to letting points escape me. Another reason is because this year the Powerstage points also count for the manufacturers' championship and so it's our responsibility to score as many as possible."

As well as return to its traditional June date, Rally Italy's move from Alghero to Olbia has resulted in a handful of route changes, with Sunday's final leg all new.

"I'm sure that Sardinia will be another demanding rally for us, opening the road again like in Portugal," said Ogier, the seven-time World champion and triple Sardinia winner. "But, honestly, I am happy leading the championship: I always try to take as many points as I can, and this will be the aim in Sardinia too."

By winning Rally of Portugal last month, Evans was able to reignite his title challenge, although his second-place starting position on leg one in Sardinia will be far from favourable.

"Portugal was obviously a great result for us," Evans said. "We made good progress with the car set-up and our understanding of the tyres throughout the weekend, but even though it's quite a tight turnaround, I think we probably all have a few ideas as to how we can improve the package for Sardinia.

"It's not going to be an easy weekend given our road position, and that might be more of a disadvantage than it was in October last year if we have warm and dry conditions like expected."

Greensmith will have a third different co-driver in Italy

CO-DRIVER SWITCH FOR GREENSMITH AS LOUDON STEPS IN FOR SARDINIA

Gus Greensmith starts Rally Italy tomorrow with his third different co-driver of 2021.

Chris Patterson, who replaced Elliott Edmondson for the Croatia Rally in April, is skipping the Sardinia round for personal reasons, prompting Greensmith to call on Stuart Loudon as a late substitute.

The 33-year-old Scot is vastly experienced and forms part of Greensmith's gravel-note crew on asphalt rounds of the WRC. He also co-drove Greensmith on Rally Germany in 2018.

"Chris can't attend for personal reasons, which is a bit of a setback based on the amount of progress we've made in the first two events together," said Brit Greensmith, 24. "But there's nothing we can do and personal reasons come first. I've competed with Stuart before. We did a few stage-winning times so clearly we're pretty handy in a car together."

Although Loudon is a Sardinia rookie, Greensmith has competed on the rally in both 2019 and 2020.

"I've not had much luck with mechanical issues. In 2019 I had a hub fail and in 2020 the alternator dropped me out of sixth. We know we can be fast there and that's before the improvements I've made this year."

Teemu Suninen will partner Greensmith in M-Sport's main line-up with Adrien Fourmaux reverting back to the Rally2 Fiesta Suninen drove to second place in WRC2 on Rally of Portugal.

VIRUS DENTS JOHNSTON'S BID TO MAKE WRC DEBUT

Irish co-driver Aaron Johnston's wait to make his World Rally Car debut goes on after his latest attempt was again thwarted by Covid-19.

Johnston had been due to co-drive Oliver Solberg's Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC on Arctic Rally Finland in February but was prevented from doing so after testing positive for the coronavirus.

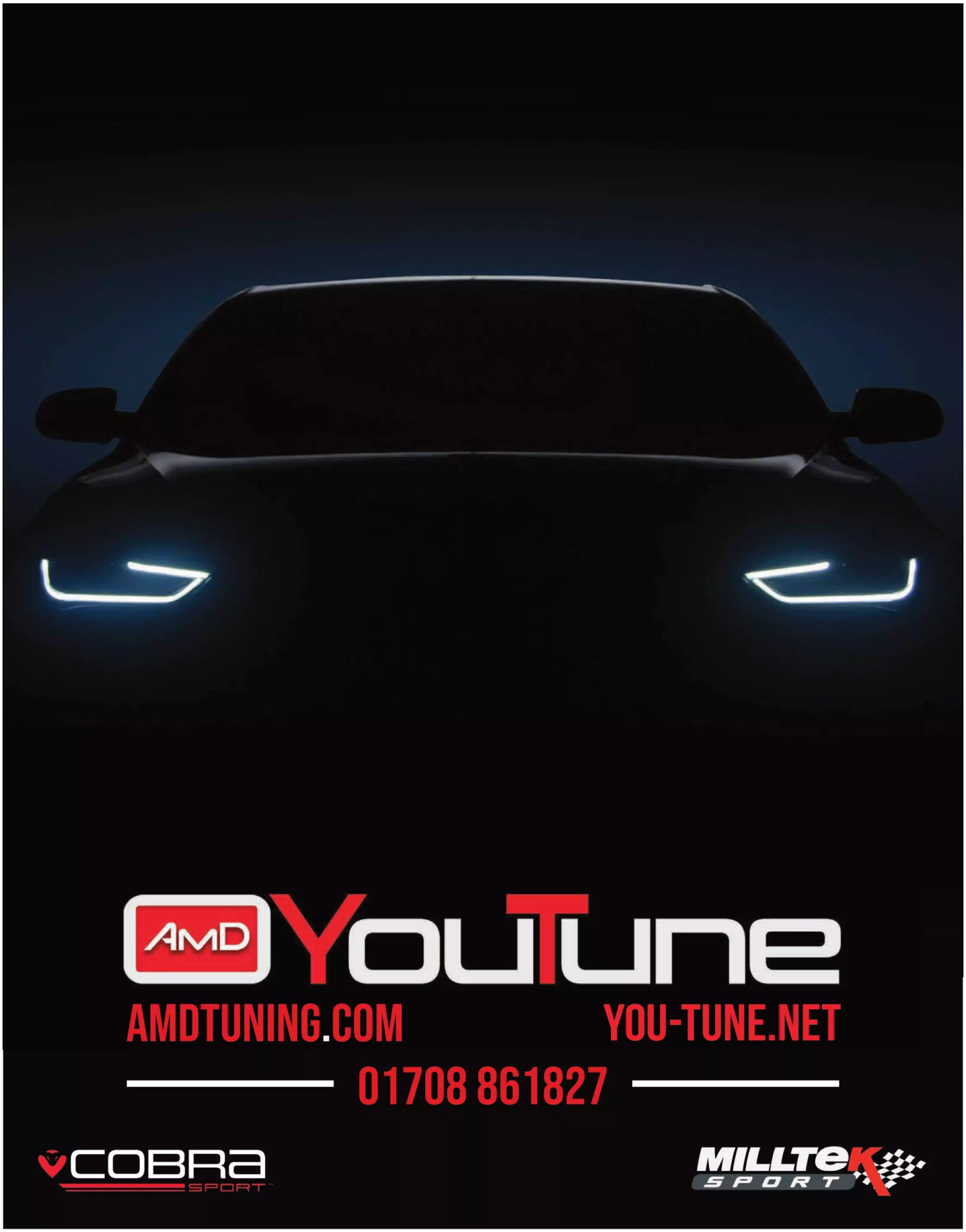
His latest effort to step up to the sport's top category was shelved when Solberg's father Petter, the 2003 World champion, returned a positive Covid-19 result shortly after Rally of Portugal.

Under FIA and local government rules, Solberg Jr has been required to isolate for 14 days, making a start on this week's Rally Italy impossible.

"My papa is doing well with a small fever and I'm thinking of him," the 19-year-old said. "It's really hard to take, but the time for my next rally in that amazing Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC will come. The most important thing is that we keep people safe."

The RedGrey outfit, which runs Hyundai's WRC2 effort, will also be absent from the Sardinia round after a team member tested positive in Portugal. With the whole squad in isolation, its entry has been pulled leaving Italian champion Andrea Crugnola without a drive.

Johnston's partnership with Solberg is on a short hiatus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RALLY NEWS

Beach reveal for the livery

M-SPORT KEEPING TABS ON DEVINE

M-Sport boss Malcolm Wilson will be watching when Callum Devine takes on a full European Rally Championship campaign this season.

Devine, 27, is switching from a Hyundai i20 R5 to a Ford Fiesta Rally2 with support from M-Sport. And Wilson, whose four WRC drivers – Adrien Fourmaux, Gus Greensmith, Tom Kristensson and Teemu Suninen are ERC graduates – will be maintaining a close interest.

"It's great to see another young driver choosing to take this route with the Fiesta," Wilson said. "We've been aware of Callum for a number of years now following strong performances with the Fiesta R2 in the Junior World Rally Championship and Fiesta R5 in Ireland. I'm keen to see what he can do as he tackles some of Europe's most famous events."

M-Sport team chief Richard Millener added: "We want to help him take that next step. We will give him as much support as we can to allow him to excel. Callum is a very determined and talented young driver with the potential to surprise a few people this year."

Devine, who will be co-driven by James Fulton with full backing from the Motorsport Ireland Rally Academy, used a photoshoot on Portrush beach to reveal his Fiesta's livery for 2021.

Devine's outing on Rally Zemaitija, which he's using to prepare for the ERC season-opening Rally Poland later this month, is actually from June 4-6, rather than last weekend as was incorrectly reported in MN.

REVAMP FOR RALLY FINLAND AIMS TO SECURE SLOT ON 2021 WRC CALENDAR

Compact event set to run in October as restrictions in the country caused concerns

Photos: Chicane Media, Hyundai Motorsport

Compact event for Rally Finland

By Graham Lister

Rally Finland's move to a three-day, sprint-style format gives organisers the best possible chance for the rescheduled WRC counter to take place as planned this autumn.

Moved from August to October in response to ongoing government restrictions in the country, the event is reliant on ticket sales to go ahead.

By containing the competitive action over two-and-a-half days, the operating costs are cut and the reduced attendance likely to result from running outside Finland's traditional holiday period can therefore be swallowed.

Clerk of the course Kai Tarkiainen said: "The route has been completed in line with national and regional restrictions introduced in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and can be modified at short notice, should any changes be necessary.

"Running without fans isn't something we can do so we are all hopeful the continued rollout of the vaccination programme and all the other steps being taken will ensure the rally goes ahead as planned and we remain confident this will be the case."

Despite the condensed format, Tarkiainen is adamant that the world's fastest rally won't lose any of its spectacle with night stages part of the new itinerary.

"It has been designed to fit completely the new autumn date and the team behind it has worked very hard to meet all the needs [of] the stakeholders and the expectations of the fans. Although we're running over three days rather than four, there will be as many stages and competitive kilometres as possible. Like every year, we have made several changes to the itinerary to keep things fresh."

While the iconic Ouninpohja stage isn't included, parts of the stage feature on the Karkaristo-Hassi test, which is due to run twice on October 2. And of the stages returning from 2019, only Harju Laukaa and Ruuhimaki are unchanged.

NORTHERN IRISH RALLY LULL TO END WITH LATEST NI CHAMPIONSHIP

Eight-time Northern Irish Rally champion Derek McGarrity will return to the contest this year after series organisers recently confirmed that the championship will go ahead in 2021.

Competition returns this month at the spectator-free Bishopscourt Stages – the first rally in over a year to take place anywhere in Northern Ireland – before the Dogleap Stages on August 7 and the Loughgall Stages a fortnight later.

A new addition to the series, promoters have added a closed-road test in addition to those that are based within the confines of Loughgall Country Park. Back-to-back closed-road events round off the rejigged championship, with the popular Tour of the Sperrins Rally on October 16 followed by the Tyrone Stages on November 6.

Multiple champion McGarrity has welcomed the news, telling Motorsport News: "I am really looking forward to getting back at it again with there being no competition for so long. For sure, I will be going all out to retain the championship again.

"I have my car – which has been fully rebuilt during the extended break – sitting, ready to go."

With no spectators allowed at Bishopscourt, the chair of Northern Ireland's Stage Rallies' Committee is asking fans to be patient as the Northern Ireland Executive eases lockdown restrictions to bring it into line with the rest of the UK.

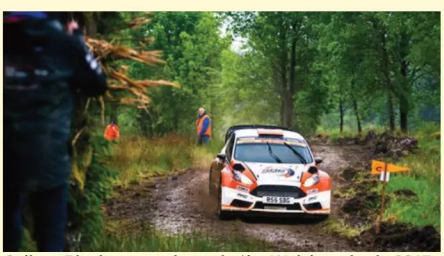
"The opening round will be a tentative first step back for rallying and everyone is working hard to ensure we have a safe, Covid-compliant rally," explained Raymond Linton. "We know fans are keen to get back on the stages and watch the action, but we must operate our opening round in line with government guidelines."

CALENDAR

Northern Irish Championship 2021

DATE	VENUE
Jun 19	Bishopcourt Stages
Aug 7	Dogleap Stages
Aug 21	Loughgall Stages
Oct 16	Tour of the Sperrins
Nov 6	Tyrone Stages

McGarrity (right) will relish a return to Irish action (above)



Callum Black was a winner in the Welsh series in 2017

BLACK KEEN TO MAKE MOST OF HIS FIESTA R5 ON UK GRAVEL

Callum Black will fight for BTRDA Rally Series and Welsh Rally Championship honours in 2021, despite having initially bought his Ford Fiesta R5 for asphalt use.

Black acquired the ex-Callum Devine car in 2019 but Covid-19 has prevented him from starting an event, meaning next month's Nicky Grist Stages will be his first in a four-wheel-drive car since 2017 when he won the Welsh championship in a Ford Fiesta R5+.

Black told MN: "I feel like there's a better chance of a gravel rally happening at the minute and to be honest I fancy a bit of gravel rallying and I don't know how much longer it will be going on for, so I feel like we should make the most of it while we can."

Black will run his Fiesta with the bigger 34mm restrictor – rather than FIA-spec 32mm – and is looking forward to battling a new-look line-up at the head of the field that includes Tom Llewellin (Mitsubishi Mirage R5), George Lepley (Mitsubishi E10), Dylan Davies (Skoda Fabia R5) and Ian Bainbridge (Skoda Fabia R5).

"It's quite refreshing," Black said. "It's sort of a transitional period I guess where the R5s are becoming more affordable [as a] clubman's car [than they were] and the older World Rally Cars are phasing out.

"Tom Llewellin will be quick and obviously Dylan Davies will be quick, and George Lepley will be there in the Evo which is quite a big bus but it's got some grunt. So I think on some stages on some events he'll be the one to beat."

WOODPECKER STAGES TO BE HELD ENTIRELY WITHIN RADNOR

The Woodpecker Stages will follow a single-venue format this September as all of the event's stages will be held within the Radnor forest complex.

Round four of the BTRDA Rally Series and the third event of the Welsh Rally Championship, the Woodpecker traditionally straddles the English and Welsh border – using classic stages like Haye Park – but access to English forestry is suspended until at least October.

Instead, all tests will be in Wales and Radnor forest; a decision clerk of the course Graham Hopewell described as a "logical choice."

He said: "We had to think outside of the box and creating a single-venue style event within Radnor was the logical step. We will offer over 44 miles of special stages and after a recent route survey, they look in superb shape having been rested for over 12 months. Of course, it's very different to the 'Woody' we all know and love, but we truly believe this is the best possible outcome to ensure the event can go ahead as planned."

Neil Cross, chairman of the BTRDA rallies committee, told MN the series is "fully supportive" of the Woodpecker's plans: "It is unprecedented times," Cross said, "they've lost their English stages [and] have had to come up with something and they had two choices: single venue in Wales or no rally. So what they've managed to pull off, over 40 miles, should be brilliant."

Spectators will unfortunately not be permitted.

Woodpecker Rally will operate as a single-venue event

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Chicane Media, Extreme E

Edwards will co-driver for Tejpar (right) on Euro campaign

BRITISH CHAMP EDWARDS COMMITS TO CO-DRIVING FOR EUROPEAN SEASON

He will step into the navigator's seat alongside Teipar

By Luke Barry

British Rally champion Matt Edwards has his first international rallying programme, but it'll be in the co-driver's seat alongside Nabila Tejpar in a Proton Iriz R5 for the European Rally Championship.

Edwards is no stranger to the navigator's role having stepped in for his own BRC co-driver Darren Garrod alongside Ruairi Bell on Rally Estonia last year in the Junior WRC. Nationally, he has started over 20 events and will co-drive for Hugh Brunton later this month on the Argyll Rally.

The ERC isn't an unknown battleground for Tejpar either, who came close to winning the Ladies' Trophy in 2019 with a Peugeot 208 R2. But in bringing the Proton, she will start her first proper rally in a four-wheel-drive car (after an appearance on last year's Goodwood Speedweek) as well as giving the Iriz R5 its first competitive start outside the UK and Ireland.

The 2017 British Ladies' champion Tejpar said: "It's undoubtedly one of the biggest challenges I've ever faced in my career, and I don't think anything about this will be easy. But it feels the right time to try and push myself and my career forwards and using an up-to-date R5 car as the Proton in a series like the European Rally Championship is the right way forward for me right now.

"Having Matt co-driving will help as his experience is second to none," she added. "I'm not looking for big results this season, I will just push myself as far as I can and learn as much as possible for the future."

BOGIE TO BRING ESCORT Mk2 BACK OUT ON ARGYLL

David Bogie has no firm rallying plans for 2021 beyond this month's Argyll Rally, but hasn't ruled out occasional British Rally Championship appearances later in the year.

Bogie told MN: "All our focus at this stage is on Argyll. We're going to use the Ford Escort Mk2 so we'll do that and we'll see where things go from there. Obviously the BRC has a championship announced – I won't be doing the full BRC but potentially the Grampian and I'll be in Mull in something, so there's definitely options there for selected events between now and the end of the year."

Bogie has done some giant-killing in his Mk2 with two overall podiums in his last three starts, but he's not sure he'll be able to perform such heroics in Argyll.

"It's a part of the country I've never, ever been," admitted the five-time Scottish champion. "I've been told that the roads are very Mull-like and from what I've seen on Facebook clips they're very narrow, very tricky. It's not Jim Clark stages for example: big, fast straights so I don't really know how it'll suit the Escort.

"The Escort likes the medium-to-high-speed stuff because of the power to weight ratio of the car but when it's technical like that, I'm not too sure how it'll suit the car. But the last two events I've done in the Mk2 have been fantastic. We did have thoughts of hiring a four-wheel-drive car but we decided on the Mk2, go out and enjoy ourselves."

Bogie: aiming to enjoy stages

MULL ORGANISERS AIMING TO CARBON OFFSET THIS YEAR'S RALLY

Mull organisers have pledged to 'go green'

Organisers of the Mull Rally have committed to an environmental policy that will offset 136 tonnes of carbon emissions this year.

Clerk of the course Andy Jardine explained: "This year we will offset carbon generated by the use of fossil fuel consumption not just on the rally route, but also getting to the rally. This means the organisers, the crews, their support crews and all the brilliant volunteers who help us out by marshalling and working as officials will travel to this part of the world safe in the knowledge that their carbon dioxide emissions will be compensated."

The Rally Guide for this year's event – which for the first time in its history will be a British Rally Championship round – is soon to be published and will reveal the route for the 2021 event.

Jardine added: "All will be revealed soon enough. As a team of organisers, we're very aware of the costs involved with competing on this event. I'm sure there will be people out there asking the question of how much the carbon offsetting is going to cost them. All I can say is that we are very confident the competitors will be pleasantly surprised by the entry fee."

ORGANISERS HAIL MASSIVE INTEREST IN NICKY GRIST STAGES ENTRY

The Nicky Grist Stages on July 10 has received what the organisers have called a "completely unprecedented" entry with 150 places being taken in just a quarter of an hour.

After 30 minutes, 200 crews had signalled their intent for the BTRDA and Welsh championship season-opener and second round of this year's British Rally Championship.

When MN put that to clerk of the course Neil Cross, he said: "It is completely unprecedented. I know events that fill up within a few days or a week or so but never 30 minutes!"

There is a small cloud hanging over this year's rally given the heavier restrictions imposed by the Welsh Government, but Cross said the strong entry will help matters. "It shows the Welsh Government there's a demand for the event, it shows the benefit it can bring to the local community and it shows the support that people have for the Welsh economy," he said. "So we think it's important and when you look at how businesses have struggled, having a massive boost like this at the beginning of opening things up has got to be beneficial for everybody."

OCEAN X-PRIX: LAC ROSE, SENEGAL BY HAL RIDGE — MAY 29-30

Rosberg squad fended off Veloce to the flag in Senegal

KRISTOFFERSSON AND TALYOR DOUBLE UP FOR ROSBERG X RACING

Three-time World Rallycross champion Johan Kristoffersson and Rosberg X Racing team-mate Molly Taylor claimed victory in the second Extreme E round in Senegal to extend their lead in the all-electric SUV series.

The Swedish-Australian duo had claimed victory in the inaugural XE event in Saudi Arabia in April in dominant style and again shone at the Ocean X-Prix in Dakar, Senegal.

The final on the Lac Rose beach circuit had to be restarted after semi-final-winning team JBXE, owned by Jenson Button, and the Lewis Hamilton's X44 squad were both forced out at the first corner of the first attempt. JBXE driver Mikaela Ahlin-Kottulinsky had been forced to stop with broken right-rear suspension and X44 pilot Cristina Gutierrez retired after contact with the Rosberg car.

In the restarted race Kristoffersson and Veloce Racing driver Jamie Chadwick went side-by-side away from the line, and had small door-to-door contact but, by using the hyperdrive feature, Kristoffersson pulled away before the first corner and the Nico Rosberg-owned team drove on to victory in the single-lap restarted race, despite bent steering from contact in the first attempt at running the encounter.

By finishing second overall, Veloce pairing Chadwick and Stephane Sarrazin made amends for not completing a single competitive lap in the season opener after Sarrazin rolled the car, which was forced to have a brand-new tubular spaceframe chassis before the Dakar round.

Third went the way of JBXE pairing Ahlin-Kottulinsky and Kevin Hansen, the latter stepping into the team last minute to replace Button who chose to sit out the event.

Results

1 Johan Kristoffersson/Molly Taylor (Rosberg X Racing) 21m52s; 2 Jamie Chadwick/Stephane Sarrazin (Veloce Racing) +14.67s; 3 Mikaela Ahlin-Kottulinsky/Kevin Hansen (JBXE); 4 Sebastien Loeb/Cristina Gutierrez (X44).

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HISTORICS

DOWN THE WORKSHOP

HILLMAN IMP TURBO

Owner: Eric Morrey

Morrey is fan of the Imp

It was going to be a race car

"I've had it for five years now for hillclimbs. I started from a bare bodyshell because someone in Dorset had the put the rollcage in and done the shell to go historic racing and then gave up and so I bought it."

He already had the engine

"It had been acid dipped and they lifted it by the roof and bent it all. I managed to get it straightened out but I couldn't straighten the roof so it's got a new roof on it. I had a yellow Rawlson Imp years ago which I used to double drive and it got rolled in a sprint at MIRA. So I needed a body to put it in and this Clan Crusader came up and so I put the running gear in the Clan and used that for a while."

He does most of the work

"I love the Imp engine. I've had one since I was given an Imp when I was about 20. For a 1960s shopping car, it's pretty good. It's a 998cc engine with a turbo and I do all the mechanical bits. The block machining and stuff like that is done for me but I assemble it all. I did everything apart from spray it and a friend did that for free. But it took a year to get it done because it's hard to push someone to do it when it's free."

It's a class contender

"I love driving it and it's pretty simple to drive. It's got probably about 180bhp so it's on a par with the other 1400s as that's where I run with the turbo. That's the main reason I went turbo as you can't get an Imp engine much bigger. You can get 1200cc and people use them for trialling for the grunt more than for the revs. But you've got to have a special crank to do all that. The turbo I've added could be put on another engine and I've not managed to blow it up yet. I've blown pretty much everything else up, but not the turbo."

He's chasing the BHC Cup

"I've done the BHC Cup for last few years. So I go all over: Doune, Gurston and so on. I had a lot of engine problems two years ago but hopefully that's all sorted now and the engine seems to be running OK."

Photos: Paul Lawrence, Jakob Ebrey

The Cobra will tackle the Kinrara event

DECORATED DRAG RACING COBRA TO RETURN TO UK CIRCUITS AT GOODWOOD

The 'Dragonsnake' being prepared to take to the grid in West Sussex

By Paul Lawrence

Mike Whitaker will bid for glory in the Kinrara Trophy race at the Goodwood Revival in an AC Cobra with an impressive US drag racing history.

Best known for his race-winning TVRs, Whitaker bought the car as a project 12 months ago and gave it a debut shakedown test at Silverstone recently. With Mike Jordan co-driving, the 1963 car will now be tested ahead of the high-profile Goodwood race.

The car was owned by American drag racer Bruce Larson and won the NHRA Finals three times in a row in 1963, '64 and '65.

In period it was known as the 'Dragonsnake' car and will run in original livery over a striking fuchsia metallic paint.

"It's one of the most successful Cobras," said Whitaker. "Bruce Larson later bought it back again and it was in his collection. It was then sold twice in auctions and I bought it from DK Engineering. James Cottingham at DK saw its potential for the Kinrara Trophy. We don't think it has been used in competition for 25 or 30 years."

Until now, all of its competitive action has been in North America but in September it will be a leading contender for the Stirling Moss Memorial Trophy for Pre '63 GT cars.

The work has been done by Cobra expert Gary Spencer at Classic Racing Cars and the car will now be run by Jordan's team. It is a narrow-track 260 Cobra, running a period correct 4.2-litre engine.

Classic BMW livery on the ex-Marc Surer March F2 machine

Ex-Marc Surer Formula 2 car returns to action

After around three decades in storage in France, the works March 782 Formula 2 car raced by Marc Surer in the 1978 European F2 season returned to racing at Silverstone with Matthew Watts.

Chassis number 8 was raced by the Swiss driver in the 1978 European F2 Championship, when he finished second to team-mate Bruno Giacomelli.

At the end of the season the 782 was sold and used in Formula Atlantic trim in the early 1980s. The March was later sold to France where it was used in hillclimbs. Watts bought it about three years ago in France from the daughter of the man who used it in hillclimbs, probably in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

"It's a real piece of history and we don't think it had run for 25 or 30 years," said Watts who took a second place at Silverstone.

Lotus back on track at Silverstone

One of what is thought to be only four surviving Lotus 23Cs raced at Silverstone when Ed Thurston and Charlie Jones-Best contested the Guards Trophy race

The 1965 sports-racing car, owned by Tony Best, spent many years in a private collection in the US and only returned to racing during last October's Goodwood Speedweek.

Only six were built in period and Best's car may be the only one currently in the UK. The main difference to the far more common 23B are flared wheel arches to accommodate bigger wheels and tyres from Formula 2 in period.

It showed pace but was retired from the race when a misfire set in.

The 23C is a rare sight on track

SHELDON BACK IN HARNESS FOR 2021

Former Le Mans racer John Sheldon was delighted to be back racing at Silverstone and Brands Hatch over the last two weekends after problems over travel from his home in Portugal. Now, he's in the clear to fly to and from the UK to race his Chevron B16 which is based near Silverstone with RW Racing Services. The veteran races now hopes to commute regularly for more UK races over the summer.

Rare Nomad FF2000 raced after 40-year sabbatical

Racer and engineer Tom Smith raced the unique Formula Ford 2000 Nomad Mk4 at Silverstone 10 days ago in what was likely to have been the car's first race since 1978.

The Nomad run of cars were the work of Phil Lloyd who was sadly paralysed in an accident at Mallory Park in 1979. In earlier Nomads, he won the Formula 1300 title. He died in 2010.

"We've had it for about five years, and it's been a bit of a project," said Smith. "It's completely different to every other car and he was clearly a very clever chap."

The car showed good pace at Silverstone before being slowed by electrical problems.

IN BRIEF

Jacobsons double

Father-and-son Laurence and Tim Jacobson fielded two cars at Silverstone when Tim gave their Sports 2000 Shrike P16 its first race in Thundersports. The Shrike's designer Richard Owen has helped them get the car sorted in recent testing. It is the 1989 car that Eugene O'Brien used to win the 1990 Sports 2000 title. They've had the Shrike for about 18 months and will race it alongside their MGB.

Clark's bid in doubt

Jeremy Clark's bid for a fourth straight 70s Road Sports title suffered a second set-back in the run-up to the recent Silverstone race. His own Lotus Elan suffered an engine failure at Snetterton but Clark was offered the loan of Brian Mitcham's Elan. Unfortunately, that car then had a fire during a rolling-road session and could not be repaired in time for the second round at Silverstone.

Bumper Wolds

The Historic Sports Car Club will head to Cadwell Park this weekend for the annual Wolds Trophy meeting. More than 215 entries have been taken, which compares very favourably with the 160 entries for corresponding meeting last September. A 38-car Formula Ford 2000 field has dictated two qualifying sessions and four races over the weekend.

Merrick's outing

Former Formula Junior racer Chris Merrick made his Lotus Elan debut in the Historic Road Sports race at Silverstone in the ex-Barry Davison car. "It's the first front-engined car with a roof I've raced in about 40 years," said Merrick, who ran an MG Midget in his early racing. "It's a lovely little car, and it's still road legal as well." He will do some CSCC races and will re-join the Historic Road Sports grid at Cadwell Park this weekend.

Marcais tradition

Oliver Marcais had his second-ever race at Silverstone in the family owned MGB. He raced in the GT and Sports Car Cup, which is organised by his parents Flavien and Vanessa. The 18-year-old A level student did some karting and had his first race in Equipe Classic at Brands Hatch recently. "I'm just gaining experience," he said. "The hour-long race is good seat time as I drove solo, and it's all about getting experience."

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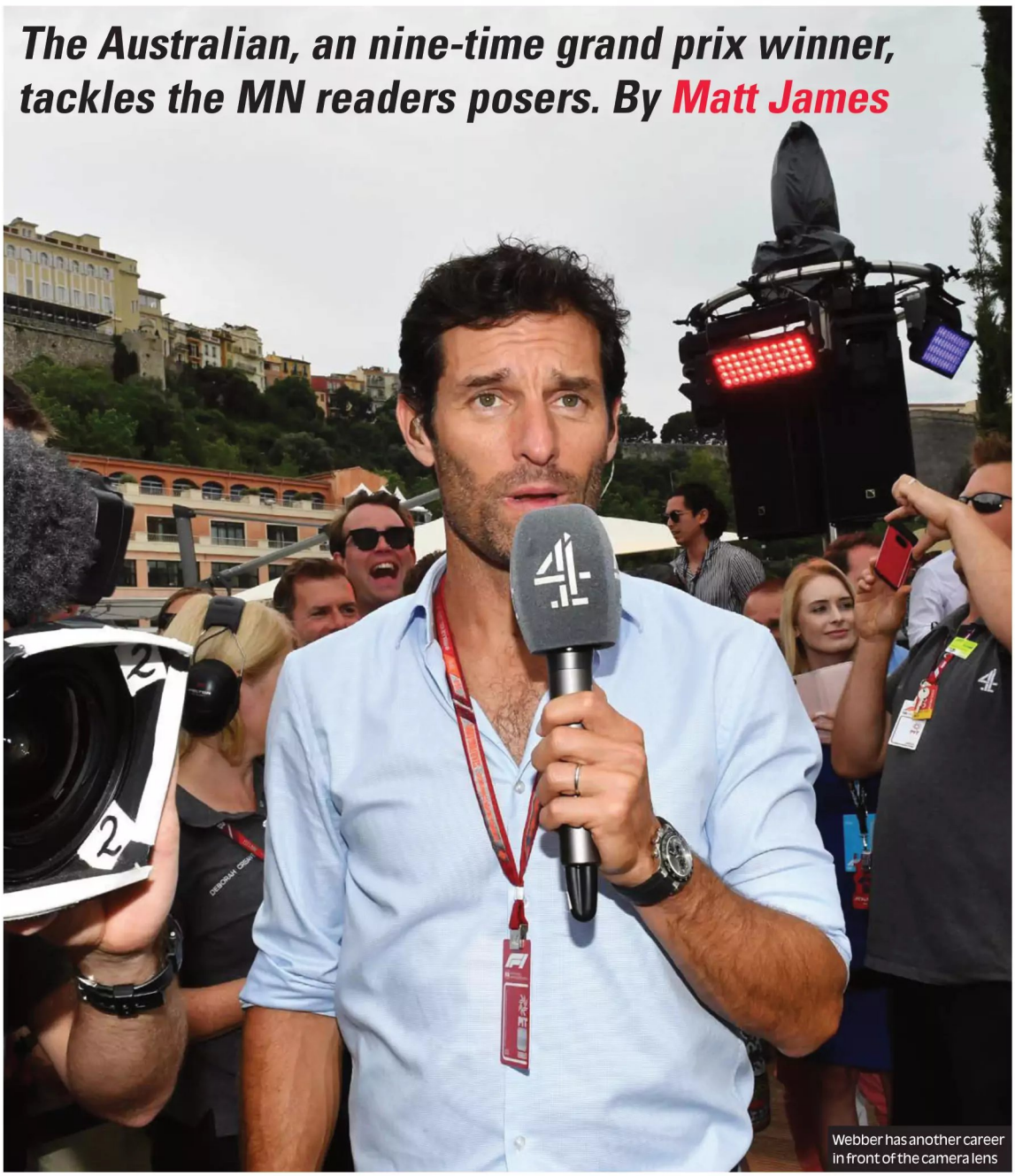
FEATURE

MARK WEBBER: I HAD A ONE-WAY TICKET TO THE TOP

The Australian, an nine-time grand prix winner, tackles the MN readers posers. By Matt James



Webber has another career in front of the camera lens

Mark Webber's Twitter name of Aussie Grit sums him up perfectly. The amiable racer had a 12-year stint in grand prix racing which brought him three third places in the Formula 1 standings, and he conquered the world in sportscar racing.

But for the New South Wales driver, things didn't come easy. He had to work for all he earned. That was true right from the starting point of his car racing career as he travelled to the other side of the world to take his first major steps.

A dream deal with Mercedes-Benz launched his career – very literally at Le Mans – but it was single-seaters where his heart laid. After a dream debut with Minardi at his home grand prix in 2002, he ended up at Red Bull in 2007 and, just as the Milton Keynes team hit its stride in the top-flight, Sebastian Vettel arrived on the scene.

When his F1 career was over, Webber went on to become a mainstay of the Porsche LMP1 crew and claimed a world title of his own with the FIA World Endurance crown in 2015.

Now Webber has swapped the steering wheel for a Channel 4 microphone as a key member of the F1 broadcasting crew. His straight talking has made him a huge hit with the viewers.

Webber took time out of his busy schedule to tackle the Motorsport News readers' questions. His answers are, in true Webber fashion, typically forthright.

Question: What persuaded you into motorsport? Were you looking at Australian Supercars?
John Charles
Via email
Mark Webber: "It was from my father really, because he was a huge fan of watching Sir Jack Brabham and Jimmy Clark, and even Stirling Moss before that. He would hang on the results of the races, but it would be two weeks before we got any news about what had happened in the races because it took a while to reach Australia.

"He loved the Tasman series and the drivers coming down to Warwick Farm and Longford: he would hitchhike to some of the races to see them. He wasn't a touring car man, he was always into open-wheelers.

"That had a great knock-on effect for me when I was a young teenager. I used to watch a lot of grands prix and I remember the first one I watched was the Monaco Grand Prix in 1984, the wet one. That was the Ayrton Senna race where he shone in the Toleman and Nigel Mansell crashed up the hill when he was leading. That's vivid in my memory, Mansell dropping it up the hill to Beau Rivage.

"Coupled with that, dad had a motorbike dealership selling Yamahas, so I started on that. Not competing on them, but just flying around on them. Dad sponsored

Photos: Motorsport News

British Formula Ford: Front row at Oulton in 1996

Victory came early on in F3 during 1997

Webber, here with Ann, won the Festival in 1996

other kids on dirt bikes but I never raced because dad knew that would probably end up in a divorce in the house."

MN: So when was the first time you went to a car racing event: can you remember?

MW: "I went to Adelaide in 1991, so that was the first time I attended F1. I would have been so some domestic racing before that, but nothing quite grabbed me like a F1 race in the 1990s. Even getting there was something like a 14-hour journey for us. I just remember hanging out in the trees – I would climb as high as I could – and being so excited and watching Senna and all those guys."

MN: So if dad was not going to sponsor you on bikes, how did the car racing thing come about?

MW: "We had a family friend called Matthew Hinton. His dad raced sprint cars, and Matthew had a kart. They invited me to the track and said 'go for your life, have a run out'. The go-kart track was five kilometres from dad's workshop, so that was a huge help. None of this would have happened otherwise. It was easy to go out and drive around. I didn't drive during the week – there was no testing like they do today – but I would compete locally and it went from there. I started at 13, which was pretty late."

Question: How tough was it to come and race in the UK in 1995 in Formula Ford? Did it focus the mind on your racing career?
James Hilton
Via email

MW: "I came back with Ann [Mark's now wife, who had gone to Australia for work at the time]. She wanted to give the UK another crack, so we came over. But the question is right: I wanted to give it a red-hot go. It is a long way to go back to Australia with your tail between your legs if it doesn't work out.

"A lot of people who come from that part of the world talk about sacrifices and what they've given up, but I don't subscribe to that. It wasn't a sacrifice at all: it was all upside, particularly if you managed to pull it off. It worked for me.

"Some guys might go home and look to a future in touring cars to give themselves a security blanket – they seemed to almost have a return flight booked. I never had a return flight booked. It was a message for myself that I had to make it work for me.

"It was tough at times and yes, I would love the Formula 1 World championship to be in my home town, but that wasn't going to happen.

"When you come over and you want to make it, you have to stamp your authority on it when you can. There are people who have achieved a lot more than me in the sport, but I had to take my chances. There were 'experts' at home in Australia who thought I would be back home within a couple of weeks, but that was just fuel on the fire for me."

MN: Did you find the racing in the UK tough when you first came over? A lot of overseas drivers say that it really opens their eyes…

MW: "Absolutely. It was about the depth of the competition. Normally, if you were one or two tenths off the pace in a domestic championship – in Australia or anywhere in the world – you might still be on the front row. But when you come to something like the Formula Ford Festival or the European Formula Ford championship, which I did in 1996, and you are going to be on the third or fourth row if you are not right on it.

"I remember my first Formula Ford Festival in 1995. I think it was in practice, and there was a yellow flag out at Druids. I backed off, double-waved yellow, I was looking for where the car was off the track and all of a sudden, there was a Brazilian lunatic smashing me in the gearbox trying to get ahead! That sort of thing would never have happened in Australia. It was certainly a different experience…It was very intense and the standard was very high"

Question: Coming up through the ranks is hard for any young driver. Was there ever a stage of your early career where you thought it was all over?
Russell Scobbie
Via email

MW: "I was struggling after I won the Formula Ford Festival in 1996 to get the budget to go to Formula 3. That was really hard – the Christmas and new year period. I had good career momentum and I thought we could get some good funding out of Australia to keep the racing going. It was tough because we had to take that big step up to Formula 3, which was quite a leap.

"From an age perspective and from a finance perspective, we didn't have time to go off and do Formula Renault or Formula Vauxhall Lotus at that stage, like a lot of drivers were doing. We had to crack on, and there weren't many people around in that era who went straight up to Formula 3 like I did. People would go to another wings-and-slicks path first, so I wasn't in the normal groove.

"I managed to win the fourth race of the season at Brands Hatch and then Mercedes stepped in and saved my arse, really."

MN: That brings us on to another question...

Question: How did the Mercedes link come about in 1997?
Jack Crowther
Via email

MW: "I actually got invited to the Grand Prix Ball in Melbourne in 1997. I had been asked there as the winner of the Formula Ford Festival. For me, it was like a networking night to see as many people as I could and say hello.

"Norbert Haug [then boss of Mercedes Motorsport] was there, and I didn't know him from Adam. I gave him my card and I told him I was racing in British Formula 3 that season. I introduced myself and that was literally it.

"Then, in the middle of 1997, something weird happened. I think Gerhard Berger's father had passed away and Gerhard missed a couple of grands prix. That meant that Benetton's reserve driver Alex Wurz would step up and replace him but the knock-on was that it meant there was a seat with the Mercedes sportscar team.

"AMG and its boss Gerhard Unger got in touch and they said they had had a great run with drivers from British F3 – people like Dario Franchitti and Jan Magnussen – and they said they would love to give me a run. I remember where I was when I took the phone call. I was in Aylesbury sitting on the stairs. I was looking at Ann while I was on the phone and I wondered if was a wind-up. Five months before, I had been a Formula Ford driver…

"I said no to the deal originally. Before that, the longest race I had done was a 40-minute British Formula 3 race. There they were, and they wanted me to do three hours in a sportscar, or at least 90-minute stints. My whole head was going towards the fact that it was probably a bit early in my career for that sort of chance.

"I said no, but asked if I could do a test. I clearly wanted to be involved. [British Formula 3 team boss and fellow Aussie] Alan Docking was good on the advice there. I told him I was knocking them back and I felt like I was undercooked. I wanted to drive the car, but there had to be a time and a place for it.

"Mercedes, bless them, they still put a test on for me. It was myself and Roberto Moreno. I couldn't believe it – I used to watch Moreno in Formula 1, and there was me who'd just won the Formula Ford Festival. They took Moreno for that first race in the Nurburgring. I tested again at the Red Bull Ring. I remember landing at some random airport and I had my Austrian schillings and my Deutsch marks – it was all new to me and a bit overwhelming.

"Alex Wurz was brilliant and told me all the tricks with the car, all the things that might catch me out. There were a lot of traps with that Mercedes, and that was before they started taking off…

"They were tricky. It was an extraordinary experience with the brakes and the downforce and Alex was such a help. After that test, they paid for the rest

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FEATURE

of my Formula 3 season including Macau and then I went on to have a two-year contract for 1998 and 1999. So that's how it came about, it was really down to Berger's situation."

Question: Did you think you were going to be badly hurt at Le Mans when the car flipped over (twice) in 1999?
Emma Facey
Via email
MW: "It has been well documented, and they were famous crashes unfortunately. When you leave the ground in any car, it can go either way. You are in the lap of the Gods. I stayed inside the circuit, which was a good thing and that is clear in my mind although I had no control over that. I was seeing sky, track, sky because I was flipping… I remember thinking how thin the windscreen was. I was petrified, and that was in the forefront of my mind. I was thinking how thin that was because if I were to end in the trees, there would be very little protection. They would have come straight through.

"In the first crash in practice, I ended up on all four wheels, but I had broken suspension and I had lost the steering, everything – there were corners missing. Because I had gone off around a little corner on the way down to Indianapolis, I ended up in front of a marshal who was directing me to park up in a little gap in the barriers! He just thought I had a little problem because he hadn't seen what had happened up the road…

"Then we had the second one on the installation lap in warm up on Saturday. They were horrendous accidents and the cars where very dangerous then. BMW flipped, Porsche flipped, they all did it. The cars were inherently badly designed, but we just had the most high-profile crashes because we had no power. We had a very, very poor engine and when you have a poor engine, you strip the aerodynamics out of the car."
MN: Were the drivers involved in the decision process to withdraw from the race, or was it just the Merc bosses?
MW: "The chat started after my first one, but the problem with that one was that there was no footage of it. There were no still photos even, just a destroyed car. It was hard for people to get their head around what had happened, although clearly it did. You could see the marks on the track and the telemetry. Something curly definitely had happened.

"But after the second one, the penny started to drop a bit. The warm-up one was on TV and there was a photo. The photographer was probably just getting himself ready for the weekend and turned around and took probably the most important photo of his life…

"That is when it all started to come through and we were asking what we do. I was putting a lot of pressure on [team-mate and de facto Mercedes lead driver] Bernd Schneider. We got on very well, we are like brothers, and I was begging him that we shouldn't start the race. I had been through it twice and no-one else had.

"There was a thought that we shouldn't go to close to other cars. But I hadn't been close to others when I had flipped. Maybe a bit in the first one, but certainly not in the second one. They knew it would be a hard race to win at that point, but they decided just to chuck a load more downforce on it and see. They'd lose face, but they would lose some performance but the car would be safe.

"Then Peter Dumbreck had his crash in the race. I think Franck Lagorce was in the other car and, whatever the radio call was, Franck had made the decision that he was going to stop and drove straight into the garage."

MN sets the scene: After a spell in Formula 3000, Webber jumped into Formula 1 at the beginning of 2002 with the lowly Minardi team. He finished in the points on his very first race in a fairy tale for the driver and for the team.
Question: Did you think F1 was easy when you came fifth in your opening race?
Damien Doherty
Via email
MW: "Definitely not! I knew it was a massive fluke and most of the field wasn't in the race by the time the chequered flag flew.

"There was a lot attrition. There was lots going on – so many firsts. It was a long race, I didn't fit properly in the car. I was suffering with the contact points of knees, hips and elbows. It was torture, but I wanted to finish. Getting to the end was a ginormous relief. It was a packed house, there were more than 100,000 there and the atmosphere was great. But I certainly wasn't complacent at all.

"Despite finishing fifth, Michael Schumacher had still lapped me three times [actually twice] so I knew I still had a bit of work to do!"

Question: You seemed to excel on street circuits – are they your favourite and why?
Malcolm Munt
Via email
MW: "It is funny that, because I was never intimidated with the barriers. There was a lot of chat at the Monaco Grand Prix this year about it. I was reminiscing with David Coulthard. I actually had one shunt in Monaco in Formula 1 – well I had one in F3000 too but I did a Charles Leclerc: I crashed in qualifying but kept pole.

"In 2002, Eddie Irvine had dropped some oil at the Swimming Pool section and I hit that and crashed the Minardi. It wasn't too bad, but then from 2003 until 2013, I never shunted another car at Monaco.

"There probably weren't enough street circuits on the calendar for me. I just felt that, for some reason, I was rewarded with my temperament and I just felt comfortable with the barriers all around me. It is about building yourself up to gun for those big qualifying laps.

"It is ironic, because I was not actually that good a low-speed corners. At a normal track, high-speed corners are where I would do most of my damage when I was driving well. Low-speed corners I was either neutral or I would lose time, so it is a bit of an oxymoron to be fast on street tracks because, by nature, they are slow in terms of the corners. It is slightly bizarre.

"I suppose street tracks put a different emphasis on your accuracy. You need that. There are a lot of drivers who hate street circuits because maybe they are worried about that precision. When I was at my best, I could put the barrier to the back of my mind and just drive within the white lines."

"I'm usually strong on the high-speed corners"
Mark Webber

Formula 1 debut: Australia in 2002

Mercedes gave Webber a break in 1998

Brazil in 2013: the end of the story with Red Bull

Question: What was wrong with Jaguar when you raced with the team in 2003 and 2004? Why wasn't it more successful – it seemed to have the right money?
Jonathan Astbury
Via email
MW: "It was probably the aerodynamics. We had a good budget, but it was mainly about the car. It is the same today: if the car is not at one with the regulations in terms of the aero then you are going to struggle. That car was extraordinary over one lap, but it just destroyed the tyres. It gave you a lot of confidence as you started out on fresh tyres, but as the stint when on, the grip levels were just awful. The Jag was great in a straight line but it would take a lot of energy out of the tyres."
MN: What is it like when you sign for a team and get to drive the new car for the first time and realise it is a bad car? Your heart must sink...
MW: "The worst moment I had with that was when I signed for Williams for 2005. I drove Juan Pablo Montoya's Brazilian GP-winning car, the FW26, from the year before at the end of 2004 at Barcelona and I just thought 'this is going to be easy'. That car was just so easy to drive. It had no tyre degradation: it was just a peach. It had a missile of an engine and it was one of the best F1 cars I ever drove.

"Then we had a slight change of regulations with the diffuser and the aero rules, and the team brought out the FW27, which was horrendous.

"We knew. I remember ringing my dad from the back of the garage after that first test and telling him that we were in the shit with that car…"

Question: Who was the worst team-mate you ever had? And was there a driver you would like to have been partnered with but weren't?
Danny Roberts
Via email
MW: "I had a lot of good ones. I didn't actually hate any of them, to be honest. The ones that I probably had the least in common with was Nico Rosberg and Nick Heidfeld, both my team-mates at Williams. There was no real chemistry towards each other."
MN: Who would you like to have driven with?
MW: "Probably Rubens Barrichello. We get on great, we still do. But also Lewis Hamilton. He probably would have killed me. I have spoken to so many people who have worked with him. I think I know a lot of the answers so I wouldn't need to do a full season to see how good he is. We did several races together and that was super-rewarding.

"So in terms of the fun component of going racing, I would have loved to have raced with Rubens, but in terms of the learning, it would have been Lewis."

MN sets the scene: Webber spent five seasons alongside German Sebastian Vettel as Red Bull reached its peak with four straight drivers' titles. It was sometimes a fractious relationship between the pair…
Question: What weaknesses did you find in Sebastian Vettel?
Barry May
Via email
MW: "I think Seb really didn't like a disrupted weekend. So, for example, if it was raining on Friday that could knock him off course. It would unsettle him. Sometimes he didn't like multiple laps in qualifying. If we were struggling for tyre temperature and had to do more than one lap, he wouldn't like that. He would sometimes overanalyse that and not know quite when the tyres were ready to go.

"And fascinatingly, given the amount of mind-management he could do and his capacity, he always seemed to struggle with safety cars and it is amazing how much Rocky [engineer Guillaume 'Rocky' Rocquelin] had to help him through that situation. He was always on the radio to him, telling him the gaps and what's going on. Under the safety car, I think he has hit the DRS board once, he has hit me, he has hit Lewis Hamilton too. He has hit quite a lot behind the safety car – I think he struggles to drive slowly.

"I think in Budapest in 2010, I got the race win because he fell asleep at the restart. He got a penalty because he didn't stay close enough to the safety car. But he also wasn't good on the pit entry.

"I had a lot more weaknesses than he did though and so don't think I am having a go and don't just mention the shit stuff. He had a lot of amazing qualities and he could kick my arse in so many other areas."

Question: What would you have done differently? Are there any regrets in your career?
Nancy Mather
Via email
MW: "The Pirelli tyres [which came in as the single tyre supplier in 2011] were really a challenge for me and the team were brilliant and tried really hard to help me understand them even more. But in the early days there was a huge pacing element.

"I generated my lap time in the high-speed corners, that made it really challenging because I didn't have enough strings in my bow like Fernando Alonso or Lewis Hamilton to adapt. I needed to be able to take high-speed corners flat out every lap to earn the lap time. That was a positive for me, but when Pirelli arrived, we were having to take it easy in the high-

Le Mans in 1999 proved to be a dramatic one for the Merc drivers

"I'm there to unlock emotion from F1"

Mark Webber

Joining Williams proved to be another false dawn

Monaco master: Webber twice took his Red Bull to Monte Carlo wins

speed stuff to look after the tyre. That pigeonholed me in the slow-speed stuff, because I had to work out where to find my lap time back.

"That was something I could have worked more on. I tried hard but, in the end, sometimes I would go back to my default and that would end up hurting my race pace. Getting on top of those and cracking that code would have helped me."

MN: And is there anything in your career which you regret – and I guess this is looking back over all of it?

MW: "Look, I think any driver would be full of regrets for all the micro-decisions you make in the cockpit. There are so may ifs and buts and they all have consequences. You can't reinvent every grand prix you have ever done and if you did, we would all be five-time World champions. There are lots of little things, but at the time you do your best.

"Generally, there are no regrets. I think the decision between Williams and Renault in 2005 was a tough one. If I had gone to Renault, would I ever have got in at Red Bull? Probably not, who knows. But things happen for a reason. And any mistakes you have to put down to something to help you in your future."

Question: Who is the hardest driver to interview? Do you still get an inside track into what's going on at Red Bull?
Adam Harrison
Via email

MW: "Probably Kimi Raikkonen is still the hardest. I am not a big journalist: I am there to talk about the emotion and the passion of what you are seeing on the TV. I enjoy interviewing people after a race or after a scenario has happened. For me to go down and do a one-on-one interview with someone like Franz Tost, for example, isn't me. They should send someone else for that.

"I am not that journalist with that bone in my body. I am more interested in what the emotions are and try to pull that out for the fans. Often, naturally, you will know the answers that you are going to get but you still ask them to pull the answers out.

"As for getting the inside track – I have a good relationship with a few teams. Red Bull is probably the best because of all the characters that I have known there for so many years but naturally, there is an element of rules of engagement and professionalism. There are boundaries that you don't want to cross and sometimes there are things that you know you don't want to advertise about the team.

"Sometimes, people give you things and you realise when you have to keep things to yourself and when people have given you something in confidence. We do find out quite a bit but sometimes, it is not going to bring too much to the show. You can have information, but it is not really needed on a wider scale. But it is also good sometimes to have a bit of guesswork in the coverage.

"Sometimes we will throw something out there and if we're wrong, then it makes us look silly which is all part of it – the punters like that too!"

Question: What is your opinion on the F1 sprint races? What one rule would you introduce if you could to improve F1?
Alan Cochrane
Via email

MW: "With the sprint race, we need to make sure that the consumer understands what they are watching and what F1 is trying to achieve, and that is not always easy because you have new customers to F1 and you have the existing customers. As long as we can control what they are watching and explain the reasons why it is happening, then we should be OK.

"Not everyone is on a website reading about F1 every day. Sometimes, they just want to switch on and watch.

"I have a thing about shortening events though. When you turn on tennis and look at the smaller tournaments, they play three sets and they are not as difficult to win. Five-set Grand Slams are the hardest to win. Even though the longer events might be more boring every now and again, all the top players want to win the Grand Slams and the bigger tournaments. The best of the best will find a way to win in five sets. Over time, focus and concentration is exposed over a longer event that you don't get with a shorter event. The best and the greatest will often look better in a longer event.

"So we have to be careful with the sprint races in F1 that we don't flatter the people who aren't as skilful. I know it is positioning [for branding] and a bit of a lottery to have the talking points that we need but we can't have the points and the prestige around a shorter event which might end up helping people who simply aren't as good as the top drivers."

MN: Any rule changes you would like?

MW: "It is a big topic, but refuelling is something. That was quite quirky in the middle of the races, not knowing after a flat-out qualifying and a mid-race top up. It often brought some jeopardy.

"Lewis Hamilton has just touched on this recently too, but there needs to be a way to make sure the most skilful drivers get onto the F1 grid. As a sport, we must represent ourselves in the best way that we can from a talent perspective. People want to watch the best of the best in any situation. That's the same in Moto GP, tennis, football, golf….

"I think we are at our limit on that and we can't have any more examples like we have. Look at the Lando Norrises, the Geroge Russells, the Max Verstappens, the Charles Leclercs – even the old Lewis Hamiltons or Fernando Alonsos. These are the stories the sport will want, and we need more of those. That is just so good for motorsport." ■

The Jaguar had great one-lap pace, but struggled on longer runs

Making his Mark: points on his Formula 1 debut in Melbourne 2002

FEATURE

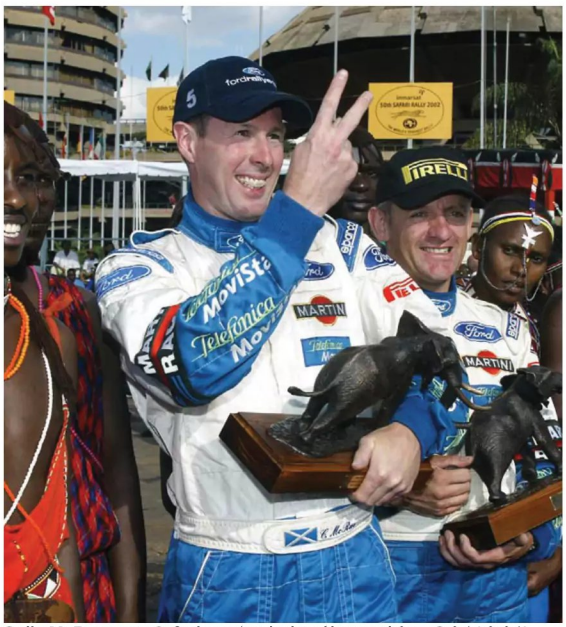
Kicking up a storm: Petter Solberg on the 2002 rally

WHY GOING ON SAFARI WILL REIGNITE RALLYING'S TOUGHEST CHALLENGE

Graham Lister looks at the return of the WRC unique event for the 2021 season

The landscape is like nothing else on the WRC calendar

Toyota has a strong record: Bjorn Waldegard won in a Celica in 1990


Colin McRae was a Safari master, helped by co-driver Grist (right)

When the expected 58 crews are flagged over the ramp in Nairobi on Thursday June 24 for the start of the Safari Rally it will have been 18 years, 11 months and 10 days since Colin McRae and Nicky Grist won the last Safari to count for the World championship back in July 2002.

Arguably motorsport's roughest and toughest event should have returned to the top flight in 2020 only for the first wave of Covid-19 to put a stop to that.

But it's back this year as round six of the World Rally Championship season, and while it won't be like a Safari of old – the total competitive distance is 11 miles shorter than the entire leg one of 2002 – a true WRC icon is returning nevertheless.

Naivasha, 50 miles west of the Kenyan capital Nairobi, and the surrounding countryside of the Rift Valley are home to all-but one of the 18 stages (Nairobi hosts the opening superspecial) with a competitive distance of 198.05 miles in store.

Grist has had a look over the route and believes the current crop of WRC stars will like what they see. They just won't get to discover a fraction of what he, McRae and the others experienced almost 19 years ago.

"It was actually my favourite rally in the whole of the World Rally Championship, only because of the lie of the land, the challenge it gave you, the animals, the people, it was all so different to anything else you did in the championship," says Grist. "When it came back on the calendar I thought 'that's unusual', it was too expensive before so why, in the era of the most expensive rally cars that have ever been used, is it back in the calendar? But when I saw the schedule, I understood why it's possible because the mileage they are doing in a day would have been one section, let alone one day of competition back in the day. It's so very different to what the Safari was but it's in Kenya and it's still the Safari Rally."

As a big Safari fan, Grist refuses to "knock the event", but freely accepts the world – and the WRC – has changed significantly since 2002 and a traditional Safari would have no place in the current-era World championship.

"It's still the Safari but before it was a 5000-kilometre route over five days timed to the minute, going through the night, going flat-out on road sections to put some new tyres on and top up some fuel, to get to the next competitive section on time. Now it's very much a watered-down Safari. While they will still have antelopes to a point and on the plains they'll get some zebra, they're not going to go to a place where they've got elephants or what have you. There won't be team helicopters to warn you there are wild animals, vehicles coming, people walking in the road. Now it's very much on closed roads, no vehicles, no people, maybe the odd animal, but it's all 15-20 kilometre sections whereas before you could have 150 kilometres in one competitive section alone. It's more compact and probably half the challenge."

Grist won 21 rallies in the WRC and looks back to his trio of Safari successes with great fondness, despite the event's arduous nature.

"It was the toughest rally in the world," he says. "Half the time it was not just a question of having a car that could win but a driver that would keep his car in a good enough condition to get him through the event. It very much was a balanced approach, a sensible approach by the driver and co-driver to make sure the car stayed in one piece because the conditions would break it very easily no matter how strong the car was.

"You really did have to have a car that was as strong as it could be. You'd never make it strong enough that it would never break because you'd be driving a Chieftain tank at the fraction of the speed. There was always very much a balanced approach. Some of the roads they are using for the Safari were used a few weeks ago in the [African championship Equator Rally Kenya] so obviously they are going to be regraded and looked after. There was one section that became quite broken up with a lot of loose rocks but that would just be like a second passage on Rally Turkey, for example.

Photos: mcklien-imagedatabase.com

Rocks and rivers can catch out the very best, as Richard Burns proved

Local fans are hugely supportive of the world's leading drivers...

TALE OF THE TAPE

Safari Rally all-time winners

WINS	DRIVER (YEARS)
5	Shekhar Mehta (1973, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982)
4	Bjorn Waldegard (1977, 1984, 1986, 1990)
3=	Juha Kankkunen (1985, 1991, 1993)
3=	Colin McRae (1997, 1999, 2002)
2=	Miki Biasion (1988, 1989)
2=	Richard Burns (1998, 2000)
2=	Tommi Makinen (1996, 2001)
2=	Joginder Singh (1974, 1976)
1=	Ove Andersson (1975)
1=	Ian Duncan (1994)
1=	Hannu Mikkola (1987)
1=	Jean-Pierre Nicolas (1978)
1=	Carlos Sainz (1992)
1=	Ari Vatanen (1983)

SCHEDULE 2021

LEG ONE, PART ONE

Thursday June 24, 2021

STAGE	LOCATION	DISTANCE	TIME
Start (Nairobi):			12h46
SS1	Super Special Kasarani	3.07 miles	14h08

LEG ONE, PART TWO

Friday June 25, 2021

Service A (KWS Naivasha)			07h00
SS2	Chui Lodge 1	8.28 miles	08h09
SS3	Kedong 1	20.30 miles	09h05
SS4	Oserian 1	11.72 miles	10h18
Flexi-Service B (KWS Naivasha)			12h22
SS5	Chui Lodge 2	8.28 miles	13h46
SS6	Kedong 2	20.30 miles	14h42
SS7	Oserian 2	11.72 miles	15h55
Flexi-Service C (KWS Naivasha)			17h29
Leg one total: 83.64 miles			

LEG TWO

Saturday June 26, 2021

Service D (KWS Naivasha)			06h55
SS8	Elmenteita 1	9.11 miles	08h08
SS9	Soysambu 1	12.63 miles	09h08
SS10	Sleeping Warrior 1	19.28 miles	10h22
Flexi-Service E (KWS Naivasha)			12h37
SS11	Elmenteita 2	9.11 miles	14h05
SS12	Soysambu 2	12.63 miles	15h08
SS13	Sleeping Warrior 2	19.28 miles	16h22
Flexi-Service F (KWS Naivasha)			18h07
Leg two total: 82.07 miles			

LEG THREE

Sunday June 27, 2021

Service G (KWS Naivasha)			06h25
SS14	Loldia 1	7.04 miles	07h26
SS15	Hells Gate 1	6.56 miles	08h38
SS16	Malewa	6.03 miles	10h45
SS17	Loldia 2	7.04 miles	11h25
SS18	Hells Gate 2	6.56 miles	13h18
Finish (Naivasha): 15h00			
Leg three total: 33.23 miles			
Rally total: 198.05 miles			

How Grist and his notes helped McRae to a Safari Rally hat-trick

Colin McRae won the Safari Rally three times with his 25th and final WRC career win coming on the 2002 event.

Organisers of the Safari's return are promising a mixture of high average speeds and sections that will have to be negotiated at walking pace, a significant variation that the legendary Scot, armed with his Safari special pacenote system, would have lapped up.

That's according to Nicky Grist, the man who helped develop the notes and called them out impeccably to ensure there were also British Safari wins in 1997 and 1999.

"Winning the first Safari with Colin in 1997 was probably the more memorable because I worked with him on a whole-new pacenote system, specifically for the Safari to help us get through the intricacies of the roughness of the event," Grist recalls. "We worked during the test, chopped and changed a few things and added this whole-new pacenote system and we won our first Safari Rally together in 1997. That was a big turning point and it was surprising how that pacenote system stayed with Colin over the years. He turned all the rougher rallies into his strongest events.

"There was a pacenote system to go as fast as you possibly can and then there was a pacenote system that allowed you to travel as fast as you possibly could but slow enough to clear a specific section without damaging the car. That was key.

"Malcolm [Wilson] reckoned the 1999 win – the first Ford Focus win – was probably Colin's greatest win because we won by 14 minutes without winning a single section, which was the perfect scenario back then although you won't have that now.

"We worked at this system that was also about staying patient and accepting you are going to lose time but also, on the other hand, knowing that somewhere along the route you're going to be more or less there when other people would be getting into trouble and falling by the wayside with a mechanical breakdown for some reason. But that was the balance you had to strike."

Of his role in the McRae Safari legend, Grist is modest. "It was just part of the job really. I went there with Colin having learned from working with a very experienced Safari competitor in Juha Kankkunen, who had so many Safaris over the years and other events like the Ivory Coast, some really tough events."

A new pacenote system helped Grist and McRae in 1997

"While there are some river crossings it will probably be like something you'd find in Argentina and not coming at full speed, having to brake to almost nothing to drop down through a riverbank and all the rest of it, which is what we had to do."

As well as Colin McRae, Richard Burns and Alister McRae were also in factory World Rally Cars when the last Safari took place in 2002, while privateers Nigel Heath, John Lloyd and Ron Oakeley featured on the entry.

For 2021, Elfyn Evans and Gus Greensmith are the lone British driving representatives in their Toyota Yaris and Ford Fiesta WRC respectively.

"It's going to be new for both of them," says Grist. "But they won't experience that same endurance, the sheer roughness and challenges that Kenya can throw at you and certainly not what it was. As tough as the conditions were, you had sections timed to the minute and obviously there was a clear, decisive winner. Everything has changed and for them it will be a new rally in the current format with a few rough sections mixed in and not the challenge we mastered all those years ago. I had wonderful times there and was lucky enough to win three of the latter Safari rallies."

Nevertheless, Grist insists the latest incarnation of the Safari won't be a walk in the park for Evans, Greensmith and their World Rally Championship rivals.

"There will be a lot of challenges for the guys. The surfaces are going to be different. They're going to be learning the intricacies of black cotton soil when it appears randomly through the route. And if it rains this becomes like ice effectively.

"It's something unique to Kenya in many ways. It's a sandy-like surface that blends into the natural red murram soil that's there. When you get this black cotton soil when it's wet you've got to be careful. It's like black top on Tarmac when liquid tar comes up above the road. It's not easy.

"It will be more like a full-on sprint event with a bit of caution here and there, not the balanced approach like we had before."

As well as the competitive element of the event, the Safaris of old were characterised by the never-ending testing that took place, which lasted for several months, as Grist recalls.

"The first time I ever went there I had a contract with Toyota and they just launched the 185 Celica so we went in the beginning of December to start testing the car. We had three weeks there then came home for Christmas, went straight back out in the New Year and, other than one week off, we stayed out there until the rally was done."

Current WRC rules prevent testing outside Europe and the majority of drivers are scheduled to arrive the weekend before the action gets underway.

Previously, the Safari was treated as a standalone event with manufacturers establishing satellite operations based in Kenya tasked with essentially recouping the massive investment by winning the rally.

"Reconstructing the rally route, doing a high-speed test with the rally car and the helicopter, service vehicles allocated with service times, basically allowing us to put the car through an actual rally scenario on the actual rally roads is what we did back then," Grist remembers.

"The route was 5000 kilometres then, you had 30 pacenote books, none of this two or three books that you have now. It's was a vast area going from Nairobi to Mombasa, Nairobi to Eldoret up in the Cheringani mountains to the desert areas of Maralal and down through the Mount Kenya Safari Club and back down to Nairobi again so it was a whole different world. It's just unfortunate these guys will only be seeing literally one very small area of that rally route."

While there's no disputing the 2021 Safari won't be the fearsome challenge the event once was, newcomer Daniel Barritt, who will co-drive Japanese Takamoto Katsuta in a works Toyota Yaris WRC, can't wait to experience what his rallying heroes mastered in a brand of car synonymous with the Safari thanks to the efforts of legends like Juha Kankkunen, Carlos Sainz and Bjorn Waldegard who, along with Ian Duncan, helped Toyota to seven Safari wins.

"It's new to all the current generation but it reminds me of watching Colin and Richard on TV when I was a kid with the helicopters chasing them. I'm imagining it to be like an Acropolis-type rally but to sample it for ourselves will be unique."

"It made great television and I was very disappointed when it dropped off the calendar," Grist adds. "Seeing the car coming across a plain, dust billowing out the back, animals here, there and everywhere, maasai stood on rocks with spears, so completely different to everything else, but things you'd come across quite naturally because you covered such a vast area."

Jean-Pierre Nicolas, who won the Safari in 1978, ran the Peugeot team Burns drove for in 2002 and Harri Rovanpera – father of current Toyota star Kalle Rovanpera – finished second with that same year.

"The Safari has always been a real classic, a beautiful rally, very difficult," says Grist. "It was always called the hardest rally and it was easy to see why. Now it's different but I am sure it will still provide competitors with a unique and memorable event." ■

"It will be a learning experince in 2021"

Nicky Grist

National rallies in Kenya have paved the way for the Safari's return

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

FEATURE

Rolling back the years: Hollamby's new venture

SHAUN HOLLAMBY: AN ALL-ROUND ENTHUSIAST

He's been a racer, a team manager, a driver manager and a TV presenter. Now, Shaun Hollamby is racing in historics in the car his dad used 40 years ago. Paul Lawrence talked to him.

Motor racing has been in Hollamby's blood since he was a youngster

It all began when Shaun Hollamby went to race meetings as a young child with his father Olly. The family business was Volkspares so it made sense when Olly started racing in Formula Vee in the early 1970s. He progressed to Formula Super Vee and won two titles before retiring from racing in 1980.

Shaun, who was 15 years old when his dad stopped racing, explains: "He was pretty quick considering that he wasn't testing every five minutes and spending lots and lots of money on it, but probably still a fair bit in those days.

"A big part of the business was reconditioned air-cooled Volkswagen engines and later the water-cooled engines. I started in karts in 1979 and started racing in Formula Vee in 1986.

"Dad put the emphasis on me to look after the car. He was a mechanic by trade and built up a business around that. You wouldn't want me touching a spanner! I think he was trying to force me to learn how to get on the tools. But that's never been my thing, really. I usually screw something in the wrong way round.

"I had to try and find the budget to run it and get people along to help out and I had some really good friends who helped out. I spent a lot of time blowing engines up or crashing. And then I did Formula First for a couple of years and spent a lot of time crashing. I seemed to do it better than most and my average was quite high."

The entry-level single-seater category also allowed Shaun to compete on a level playing field with some really good drivers and Chris Goodwin became a long-standing friend as a result.

"I remember taking my £500 deposit for a Formula First to Jackie Epstein at Brands Hatch, all made up of screwed up five pound notes that I'd saved," says Hollamby. "I paid the deposit and then hadn't told my mum and dad about it. So then I managed to convince them to buy a Formula First after that.

"I remember Kelvin Burt going past me once at Oulton Park in the wet. He probably had a bad qualifying for some reason. But he came past me like I was standing still and I think that was one of the moments that you just go: 'Yeah, I can't do that'.

"When you have somebody who's got talent like that I think that's a great thing. I appreciate somebody who's got the talent to do well which is why I help Jake Hill now, because I think he has got the talent to do great things. He loves the history of racing, he's not one of these guys who doesn't know anything about the history, he really loves it. He wants to go out there and drive a Porsche 962 Group C car.

"Then I did the inaugural Multisports Championship and I was champion in that, and I cling on to that quite desperately. People at work say well, it doesn't actually exist, because we can't find it on the internet, but it did exist and I still have the trophy. It's still sitting there, but semi-polished, on the desk."

After racing slicks and wings in the short-lived Formula Forward single-seater category, Shaun accepted that his career as a racing driver wasn't going anywhere and he focused on business with the acquisition in 1990 of Big Boys Toys.

"We ended up doing the Big Boys Toys Beetle Cup racing series, which I am actually really proud of. I'm probably prouder of that than anything else that we did in racing because you spent £2000 and you had a kit of parts which was engine, carburettor exhaust, tyres, wheels, seat, rollcage suspension and dampers. You could turn your road-going Beetle into a racing car.

"In about 1997 I got introduced by Chris Goodwin to work for Formula One Management to do the F1 digital TV side. I said, well, I didn't really know much about television except for turning it on. But it was a fantastic experience and then I stayed there for about five years. I left the family firm for a while and I ended up being senior director/producer, which I absolutely loved. I was the director of the last race that Murray Walker commentated on, America in 2001."

Then a family came along with daughters Lottie and Josie. "I've just become a grandfather now as my eldest Josie has just had a little boy called Brodie. So I'm now officially a

Photos: Paul Lawrence, Jakob Ebrey

The AmD VW Golf had been found in Estonia

AmD boss contested the Sport Maxx Cup

"I was proud of what I achieved"

Shaun Hollamby

Jake Hill has a bright future as a BTCC talent

The March 80V has now been put into Formula 3 specification

Podium glory: Hollamby celebrated a BTCC trophy back in 2013

Hollamby enjoyed his racing in the Volkswagen Racing Cup in a Beetle

grandfather, rather than just looking like one. I went back to the family business and took over Big Boys Toys, because my dad was retiring. I wanted to do some racing as well, to make the hassle worthwhile. And so I did the VW Cup and loved it and should have won the championship in 2005."

Gradually, Big Boys Toys morphed into AmD Tuning, because they were doing more modern vehicles, including remapping, exhaust and suspension work and normal servicing work. "We also ran a Seat Leon in the Dunlop Sport Maxx Cup, which was really nice. The first year we ran it with me driving it but then we got Simon Shaw to drive it."

After that, the part-time team looked at what to do next and the only thing that ticked all the boxes was the British Touring Car Championship. Shaun had always wanted to do touring cars, ever since his old friend Chris Goodwin raced in British touring cars in the early 1990s.

"I love touring cars; I just think it's got the right amount of razzmatazz," he says. "So we ended up doing it and we thought, well, we want to do it with a Volkswagen really. So we found this Golf in Estonia. I went with another mate of mine, Gary Kinchin who I'm known him since we were young. And he's always been about six foot five.

"We went to get this car in Estonia in the middle of the snow and we thought we were going to end up getting buried at the side of the road, but we got it and brought it back. We thought we were going to run the car on a shoestring or not a lot of money but ended up spending way too much money and gained a lot of experience. I'm never going to be the fastest touring car driver in the world.

"I was the TV director for Murray Walker's last race"

Shaun Hollamby

Hollamby: now in front of camera

But I was really proud of what we actually achieved.

"The support from [BTCC technical guru] Peter Riches, [championship manager] Dan Mayo and [chief executive] Alan Gow was fantastic. I'll always remember that because I expected them to be negative and they were the opposite. That's a big thing, because as soon as you get negativity, it makes it hard to keep moving forward. And they were super positive."

It was the start of the decade-long BTCC adventure for AmD Tuning, running a variety of cars for a series of drivers and always working hard to move up the pecking order. The arrival of Jake Hill was an important part in the jigsaw.

"I'd helped Jake out since 2010 in Ginetta Juniors. I liked his energy; I liked his spark and I could see a lot of potential in him. Financially, it was always going to be a struggle for him to get the budget. There's only a few drivers who you realise have got it and that's important for me because I don't want to be putting lots of effort into something where they're not. If they can't be bothered to go down the gym or can't be bothered to come down and say hello to the team and bring donuts, if they just want to pay some money and go racing, then that's not really for me."

The sea change for 2021 started off as a conversation with David Bartrum about buying two Focuses. "That turned into a conversation to actually merge with Motorbase as AmD and we'd sell one of our cars off, and then we'd run Focuses. Then sometimes things change and it was always in the back of my head that it was coming towards the end of me doing touring cars at some point.

"The main thing I wanted to do with the merger was that it was all going to go smoothly whether I was involved with it or not. I'm pleased to say that it has because we've had the first BTCC races and you've got Jake Hill leading the championship, Motorbase leading the manufacturers' championship and Sam Osborne leading the Jack Sears Trophy. So as far as I'm concerned, that's a job done for me."

Hollamby's only BTCC role is now as part of Hill's management team, helping to make budgets work. However, there is a fresh job on touring car weekends as a presenter for a new TV programme called Pitch BTCC which is run by Susannah Schofield OBE. "I'm still running AmD and I've got some great guys there. But then I'm also doing some work back with FOM and I'm doing the Porsche Supercup commentary with Harry Benjamin."

The modest amount of free time has also allowed him to realise an ambition to and race the March single-seater that his dad raced back in 1980.

"It was a March 80V then for Super Vee. It is exactly the same chassis as the 803 Formula 3 car and he sold it because he stopped racing in 1980 and Mark Bailey uprated the car to F3 spec," he says. "I'd seen this car for three or four years and I sort of wanted to buy it a couple of times and didn't quite get there. I thought, right, now's the time if I'm going to do it. I'm 55 and I can't leave it till I'm 60 to start doing it. And I absolutely love it. It's great. There's there's a couple of young kids in Classic F3 in Andy Smith and Benn Tilley.

"In the first qualifying session, I saw one of them catching me. I let him pass and tried to latch on and see how we got on. Within half a lap he was gone! I can't do that at the moment but I love it. I'm working with Dan Eagling from Lifetime Racing and he's a lovely guy. I love the way they work. It's fun, but it's serious. I have had to make sure I get down the gym to get my backside in the car but I love it and it's not too expensive."

There is a plan of sorts to eventually have maybe two or three historic cars. "I'd love to have an historic F1 car, but I think maybe that might be a step too far. I'd love to do the Monaco historic.

"My dad passed away at the end of 2009 when he was 65 and had a brain tumour. That was just came out of nowhere, which was a big shame, because he only retired four or five years before. He always taught me racing cost too much for the amount of fun that you got out of it. He was probably right!" ■

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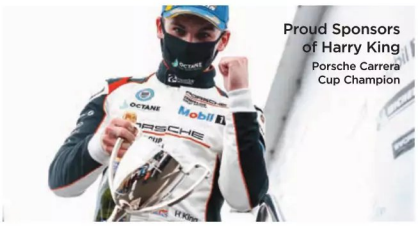

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COLUMNIST

HARRY KING

Reigning Carrera Cup GB champion tells us about his Monaco Porsche Supercup baptism

Photos: Porsche AG / hoch zwei, Porsche Motorsport

King in at deep end in Monaco

The principality track was "wild and different"

My Porsche Supercup debut at Monaco was a totally wild and different experience, which well surpassed my expectations. I didn't underestimate the streets, I knew it would be challenging, but I didn't realise just how challenging it would be.

We had pretty limited time in the new 992-generation 911 Cup car, so to then mix that with a circuit I'd never driven before was a pretty tall order, but I loved the challenge of it. In Supercup we get very limited time on track before qualifying, only 45 minutes for your single free practice session, and as expected it was full of red flags and yellow sectors, so in total we'd had a hefty 14 laps of experience! I was reasonably satisfied to finish the race in ninth, I had of course wanted more but this is somewhere where you don't want to get too greedy, and bring the car home in one piece which not everyone did.

It's just the environment that's different in Monaco. You have the barriers that are level with your eyesight and no room for error, but also the track surface is totally different. Some bits of the circuit will be in shady spots during particular hours of the day making it feel totally different. At 0930hrs for qualifying the track is completely different to how it was at 1730hrs the previous day in the beaming hot sunshine. I absolutely craved the challenge, and each time the session was over I'd just want to jump back in and go again, because you always feel there's more time to find!

The next two Supercup rounds are at the Red Bull Ring, where we'll be on for strong results. I won the two races there recently in Carrera Cup Benelux. Then after that it's the Silverstone round, where hopefully we should have spectators back by that point so it'll be nice to see some full grandstands for a change. I'm looking forward to the home race, but I actually don't know Silverstone's Grand Prix circuit despite it being my home venue! We only ever drive the national circuit in Porsche Carrera Cup GB so it'll be another new circuit to learn!

My Supercup aim this year is podiums, ideally the top step, but the competition in Supercup is incredibly high, a lot drivers have a lot of experience in it so rolling up to the race weekends at circuits that are new for me is almost like going back to basics for them.

Team Parker Racing – which partners with Revs Motorsport in the Supercup – has been in the Supercup before so I knew that my team boss Stuart Parker was familiar with it. I know he's got the same goals that I have and off the back of last year, winning Carrera Cup GB, it was the right thing to do and I have full confidence in the team. Patrick de Groot the engineer has got a very good idea of what I like in the car from our previous year of working together. Also shifting from Supercup to compete in Carrera Cup GB – I'm doing both championships this year – with the team next weekend for Snetterton's season opener won't be that much of a change, it's just adjustment to the cars and that's it.

King is confident for his dual '21 campaign ahead

I'm looking forward to jumping back in the Type-991.2 911 Cup car for Carrera Cup GB. Hopping to and from the different cars each weekend is going to pose its challenges, but I'm up for it and once you get back in those within two or three laps it'll be like riding a bicycle. The cars are so completely different that it's hard to get them muddled up which is a nice thing, as if they had minute differences it might be a bit more of a challenge.

Plus I'm quite adaptive to cars, I'm always quite adaptive to set-up changes too, continually finding ways around an issue which is something that I think sets me apart. Jumping to and from each car I don't think will be much of a problem by the season's end.

There is strong competition in Carrera Cup GB – not least from returning two-time champion Dan Cammish – but I'm treating it exactly how I treated last year for my championship year. I'm doing all the exact same preparations so there's no reason why we shouldn't have the success we had last year irrespective of who's coming in. I just see each car as another opponent to beat, regardless.

I'm looking forward to the challenge. It won't be easy of course and I'm sure Dan thinks the same. It will be a good show for everybody watching, and it'll bring a bit more attraction to the series with him being an ex-British Touring Car Championship driver. It's a great all-rounder and, even better for me, I can't wait

Monaco went beyond my expectations but I absolutely loved the challenge!

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

RACING REPORTS

Photos: Paul Lawrence

BRITISH HILLCLIMB CHAMPIONSHIP: GURSTON DOWN BY PAUL LAWRENCE — MAY 29-30

RAPID WALLACE MENZIES STRIKES THREE OUT OF FOUR

Reigning champion Wallace Menzies was the big scorer at Gurston Down last weekend as a double header for the British Hillclimb Championship offered up four top-12 run-offs.

Ultimately, Menzies won three of them in his Gould GR59M to add to his double win from the opening weekend of the season at Loton Park and make it five from six. Meanwhile, it was a bittersweet weekend for Will Hall who took the other run-off victory with a storming run on Saturday, edging Alex Summers by 0.02 seconds as the temperature dipped late in the day and the hill lost a couple of tenths.

Sadly, Hall then crashed heavily 24 hours later in Sunday's second run off. Hall went off through the finish and his Force flipped before coming to a rest and thankfully Hall was unharmed.

The accident put a dampener on Menzies' triple victory. "We're rivals but we're mates as well," said the Scot who added a new outright hill record to his impressive tally with a charging 25.34s in the first of Sunday's run offs to shave three-hundredths of a second from Scott Moran's seven-year-old mark.

This was a weekend that was always going to be decided by fractions of a second at the high speed Wiltshire hill and when conditions were at their peak early on Sunday afternoon Summers was just a tenth away from Menzies' new record.

"It's a great start to the season, but there's a long way to go," said Menzies as Summers and Sean Gould both scored strongly across all four run offs. Moran was up there too, but missed the final run off after his Gould refused to start for the second qualifying class runs.

Trevor Willis was in the top six four times but didn't quite have the last half second needed to challenge for victory. Sadly, Dave Uren and Richard Spedding never got on to the pitch, both struggling with engine problems that kept them out of action. There's little time to draw breath for the main contenders as the season continues this weekend at Shelsley Walsh with another two run offs.

Wallace Menzies claimed yet more round victories

Will Hall won on Saturday but rolled on Sunday

Results

Round 3: 1 Wallace Menzies (3300cc Gould GR59M-Cosworth) 25.55s; 2 Alex Summers (2650cc DJ Firestorm-Cosworth) 25.88s; 3 Will Hall (2000t Force-Xtec) 25.97s; 4 Sean Gould (4000cc Gould GR59JB-Judd) 26.05s; 5 Trevor Willis (3200cc OMS 28-RTE) 26.60s; 6 Scott Moran (4000cc Gould GR59J-Judd) 26.67s.
Round 4: 1 Hall 26.00s; 2 Summers 26.02s; 3 Menzies 26.20; 4 Moran 26.48; 5 Gould 26.58s; 6 Willis 26.79s.
Round 5: 1 Menzies 25.34s; 2 Summers 25.44s; 3 Gould 25.54s; 4 Hall 26.18s; 5 Moran 26.28s; 6 Willis 26.34s.
Round 6: 1 Menzies 25.61s; 2 Gould 25.67s; 3 Summers 25.82s; 4 Willis 26.42; 5 Simon Moyse (1300s Gould GR59-Suzuki) 28.08s; 6 David Warburton (1600cc Gould GR59-Suzuki) 28.13s.

BRITISH RALLYCROSS CHAMPIONSHIP: LYDDEN HILL BY HAL RIDGE — MAY 29

VITOLS GRABS CHANCE WITH BRX SUCCESS

Reigning Super1600 Rallycross champion Roberts Vitols flew under the radar through qualifying in the opening round of the British Rallycross Championship 5 Nations Trophy at Lydden Hill.

Racing an LD Motorsports Citroen C4 as his prize drive for claiming the Super1600 crown last year, the Latvian achieved a best time of third overall in Q3 and finished third in the second semi-final.

But, thanks to an early joker on the opening lap of the final and a succession of fastest laps, Vitols found himself at the front of the order with two laps to run in the final. Supercar champion Mark Donnelly took the top qualifier position thanks to fastest times in Q2 and Q3 and won the first semi-final. But his final lasted only a few metres as he pulled off the circuit with technical problems having never properly left the startline.

Starting on the outside of the front row, Ollie O'Donovan made the best launch and stormed into the lead on lap one, chased by fellow front-row starter Julian Godfrey, Tristan Ovenden and the returning Derek Tohill.

While Ovenden took his joker on the second tour, Tohill lost time when Godfrey's gearbox failed on the third lap and he was held up behind his ailing rival.

O'Donovan jokered on the fourth tour but, by that stage, Vitols had closed the gap to the leader. As Ford Fiesta driver O'Donovan exited the joker, he lay second.

Vitols held on for the final two tours to take a dream debut win while O'Donovan and Ovenden completed the podium. Tohill was fourth, despite a broken gear selector.

Northern Irish rally driver Connor McCloskey was on Vitols coattails early on but was slowed on his Supercar debut with an engine misfire and finished sixth in a race of attrition.

Another series returnee, Andy Scott, didn't make the final, he was spun out of contention in the first semi-final after contact with O'Donovan.

Vauxhall VX220 driver Jason Bleasdale won the Supernational final after BMW M3 racer Slawomir Woloch was handed a five-second penalty while Owen Robbins claimed a maiden win in the Junior category final.

The UK's first-ever electric rallycross race was held at the event which was run by former British Touring Car Championship racer Dan Welch. The second 5 Nations BRX round was held on Monday after MN went to press. The report will be in the June 10 issue.

Photo: 5 Nations Rallycross

Vitols used an early joker to land a surprise victory

Results

Supercar: 1 Roberts Vitols (Citroen C4) 4m24.830s; 2 Ollie O'Donovan (Ford Fiesta) +1.364s; 3 Tristan Ovenden (Citroen DS3); 4 Derek Tohill (Ford Fiesta); 5 Michael Sellar (Citroen DS3); 6 Connor McCloskey (Ford Focus). **Supernational:** Jason Bleasdale (Vauxhall VX220). **Junior:** Owen Robbins (Suzuki Swift). **Swift Sport:** Luke Constantine. **Super1600:** Nick Snoeys (Ford Ka). **BMW Mini:** Dave Bellerby. **ALL4Mini:** David Bell. **Retro 4WD:** Andy Grant (Ford Focus). **Super Retro:** John Cross (Lancia Stratos). **Retro:** Terry Moore (Austin Mini). **RX150:** Patrick O'Donovan. **Electro Rallycross:** Dan Welch (Fiat 500e).

BriSCA F1: NORTHAMPTON BY COLIN CASSERLEY — MAY 29

Photo: Colin Casserley

Harris survived a late attack from Wainman Junior Jr

HARRIS PUTS HIS TROUBLES BEHIND HIM WITH HIS 60TH BriSCA F1 FINAL

Tom Harris put his bad luck of 2020 behind him to win his first final of the year at Northampton on Saturday.

Harris, who suffered a series of mechanical woes last year, chalked up his 60th final win and his 12th at the Northampton oval.

From the drop of the green flag, Darren Clark grabbed the early lead and opened up a sizable gap from the rest of the field. Further back, Frankie Wainman Junior Jr began to make progress on the leader and as the race entered the closing stages, he took the lead only for Harris to barge past. Wainman remained on the tail of Harris and, as the duo entered the final turn, Wainman launched an attack of Harris. Both cars slammed the Armco but Harris recovered first and won the drag race to the line.

Clark continued his good form from last week with a fourth place in the final.

Earlier in the evening, Simon Traves picked up his first BriSCA F1 race win. Traves, a race-winning driver in the Ginetta G40 Cup category and was a regular frontrunner in the 2017 GT5 championship, achieved a number of podiums as well as pole position at Knockhill and can be seen most weekends at the circuits with the Assetto Motorsport team.

Results

Organiser: Incarace **When:** May 29 **Where:** Northampton Raceway **Starters:** 56
1 Tom Harris; 2 Frankie Wainman Junior Jr; 3 Michael Scriven; 4 Darren Clark; 5 Mat Newson; 6 Dan Johnson; 7 Ryan Harrison; 8 Mark Gilbank; 9 Mark Sargent; 10 Chris Cowley.

RALLYING ROUND-UP: BY IAN MILLS

Andy Davies/Max Freeman dominated the KLMC Targa Rally on May 22 in their Subaru Impreza. They took fastest time on the first test and were never headed for the rest of the day.

Kirkby Lonsdale MC had laid out 18 tests at four different venues, with the event being based at the spacious Cockermouth Auction Mart. The club had managed to attract a heavily oversubscribed and cosmopolitan entry, with 67 crews taking the start.

Davies/Freeman had built up a lead of over a minute by the halfway point, but then had their advantage cut slightly as they picked up three test faults on the next two tests. However, fastest time on three more tests ensured that they finished a minute and a half ahead of the field.

In contrast there was a close battle for second place between Owen Turner/Rachel Vestey and John Davies/Nick Bloxham.

Turner held the advantage initially, but, as two crews traded seconds on each test, it was Davies who came through to take the runner-up spot, with Turner six seconds behind.

Howard Price/Baz Green had been second quickest on the first test, just two seconds behind Davies/Freeman. Unfortunately, their Impreza ground to a halt on Test 4 with transmission problems.

Results

KLMC Targa Rally
Organiser: Kirkby Lonsdale Motor Club **Date:** May 22 **Where:** Cumbria **Championships:** ANWCC **Tests:** 18 **Starters:** 67.
1 Andy Davies/Max Freeman (Subaru Impreza) 39m 37s; 2 John Davies/Nick Bloxham (Ford Puma) +1m 29s; 3 Owen Turner/Rachel Vestey (MZ ZR); 4 Rob Cotton/Niall Frost (Impreza); 5 Danny Cowell/Phil Boyle (Impreza); 6 Louis Barnes/James Swallow (Peugeot 106); 7 Matt Flynn/Rob Bryn Jones (Impreza); 8 Steve Retchless/Sasha Heriot (Ford Escort); 9 Paul Morgan/Sam Stafford (Honda Civic); 10 Huw Morris/Richard Crozier (Ford Focus).
Class winners: H1: Graeme Cornthwaite/Marcus Pomfret (Mini); H2: John Haygarth/Bob Hargreaves (Opel Kadett); H3: Luke Tait/Josh Davison (Ford Escort); H4: Alex Willan/Glenn Fothergill (BMW E30); M5: Davies/Bloxham; E6: Jack Morton/Essi Salonen (106); N7: Tomos Parry/Sion Matthews (Vauxhall Nova).

RACING REPORTS

Photos: Steve Jones

CROFT: 750MC BY CARL McKELLAR — MAY 29-30

POLLARD EXTRACTS HIS REVENGE WITH A BRACE OF WINS

Craig Pollard (c) leads away on his way to a Formula Vee double

RACE WINNERS

Bikesports
Race 1: Joe Stables (Radical PR6); **Race 2:** Scott Mittell (Mittell MC 41RR)

Tegiwa Type-R Trophy
Races 1 & 2: Adam Shepherd (Honda EP3 Civic Type R)

MX5 Cup by 5Club
Race 1: Ben Short (Mazda MX-5); **Race 2:** Tom Roche (Mazda MX-5); Race 3: Ben Short (Mazda MX-5)

Formula Vee
Races 1 & 2: Craig Pollard (Bears GAC)

Tegiwa Roadsports
Simon Mauger (Honda Civic Type-R)

Sports 1000
Race 1: Ryan Yarrow (Spire GT3S); **Race 2:** Rich Miles (Spire GT3RM)

Locost
Race 1: Geoff Peek (Locost); **Race 2:** Mark Burton (Locost); **Race 3:** Martin West (Locost)

Tegiwa Club Enduro
Carl Swift/Richard Baker (SEAT Leon Eurocup TCR)

With 250 qualifiers for 16 races, Croft's 750MC weekender had unpredictability and talking points galore.

The Formula Vee title fight intensified as Craig Pollard – twice beaten in Cadwell's opening rounds – took revenge by doing the double over chief rival James Harridge.

Pollard's Bears GAC took pole for both races and led Harridge's Maverick all the way in the first.

Harridge, though, took the lead at the start of the second which soon turned into a classic as the pair traded top spot six times inside the opening two laps alone.

Harridge was ahead when the race was red flagged late on but, on countback, Pollard was declared the winner.

Tim Probert (Storm Bowles) and Peter Studer (TCR Challenger) took a third apiece.

Three breathless Locost races – each typically decided on the final lap – went the way, in order, of Geoff Peek, Mark Burton and Martin West, the latter's win coming thanks to a stunning move through the Complex. Andrew Tait was an ever-present threat in all three encounters.

The action was similarly fraught in an MX-5 triple-header. Ben Short won the first thrash, Tom Roche the second and Short again the third, as Michael Comber, Bens Hancy and Abbitt, and Courtney Milnes also played starring roles.

Ryan Yarrow (Spire GT3S) needed a successful appeal to have him reinstated as winner of the opening Sports 1000 race ahead of Rich Miles (Spire GT3RM). Miles won the second race, aided when Yarrow spun at Hawthorn after contact from Victor Neumann.

Joe Stables (Radical PR6) headed Scott Mittell (Mittell MC 41 RR) in the first Bikesports race, but the second went the way of the latter thanks to a decisive move exiting Sunny Out.

Adam Shepherd collected both wins in the Type-R Trophy. In race one he overcame gear selection issues to hold off Mark Balmer and Lee Deegan. Balmer led momentarily into Clervaux at the start of race two, but minor contact sent him crashing out and left Shepherd clear to lead home from Deegan.

Ross McEwen was fortunate to emerge unscathed from a sizeable crash that forced the Club Enduro race to be stopped early on. His demolished Porsche Boxster became wedged underneath the barriers at Sunny In and it took several attempts to extricate himself. The restarted race was won easily by Carl Swift/Richard Baker's Seat Leon.

Simon Mauger/Matthew Faulner's Honda Civic Type-R won in Roadsports after Andy Marston's BMW E46 M3 was excluded for overtaking under yellow flags.

SILVERSTONE: BARC BY ADAM WELLER — MAY 28-30

HYBRID TEAM STRIKES THE RIGHT TUNE IN CITROEN 24-HOUR BATTLE

The second Citroen C1 24 Hour held at Silverstone had Sam Weller, David Meenan, Mark James and Stephen James claim victory for Hybrid Tune – Full Circle Racing, after a lengthy battle with the AB Motorsport entry of Oliver Allwood, Stuart Symonds and Brian Trott.

The winning car started eighth, joining an early dice for the lead among the top 10. After tight racing in the first couple of hours, the field spread as the first scheduled pitstops were made, and the night drew in. Come sun-up, fog necessitated a safety car to lead the field for almost two hours, and several of the cars previously at the sharp end had fallen out of the top 30.

The WRC Developments entry lost time after a roll for George Smith, and gearbox maladies befell the Mad Rabbit Racing team after a charge to the lead from Rob Austin. Meanwhile, the Rollcentre team of Ian Stinton, Martin Short and his sons Morgan and Marcus lost time as the elder Short ran out of fuel on track.

Once the fog cleared, a battle between the eventual top two cars began; after numerous lead changes throughout Sunday, Hybrid Tune secured a definitive advantage over AB Motorsport with just over an hour to go. The eventual gap between the two cars was just 48 seconds.

The polesitting Fake-Shake 'n' Bake outfit – comprised of Matt Maxted, Tommy Field and Graham Coomes – completed the rostrum, two laps behind the leading pair.

In the Sports Prototype Cup races, Bonamy Grimes claimed two dominant victories in his Duqueine D08 LMP3. Michael Jenvey (Gunn TS6) came home second in both races, nipping at the heels of the LMP3 car where he could. James Abbott completed the overall and Open class podium each time of asking in his uprated USA-spec Revolution A-One.

In the Revolution class, Bradley Ellis and Sir Chris Hoy took a victory apiece. The Olympic champion secured his newest gold after a close battle with Chris Short, who ultimately spun at Luffield just over half-way through the race.

RACE WINNERS

C1 Challenge 24 Hours
Sam Weller/David Meenan/Mark James/Stephen James (Hybrid Tune)

Sports Prototype Cup
Race 1 & 2: Bonamy Grimes (Duqueine D08 LMP3)

Caterham Graduates Sigmax
Race 1 & 2: Harry Senior

Caterham Graduates Sigma 150
Race 1: Jamie Ellwood; **Race 2:** Jason McCormack

Caterham Graduates Sigma 135
Race 1: Simon Shaw
Race 2: James McCall

MX5 Racing
Race 1 & 2: Paul Roddison

JOHN OVEREND STAGES: BY PETER SCHERER — MAY 30

Photos: Kevin Money

PAWSON AND WRIDE ARE UNSTOPPABLE AS THEY TAKE 10 STAGES FROM 10 FOR GLORY

Steve Pawson and Graham Wride's Subaru Impreza was never headed on the John Overend Stages, topping the times on five of the 10 stages. The pair took the victory spoils by 27 seconds.

Scott Renshaw/Chris Bullock were seven seconds down on the opening stage, with Martin Farrar/Andy Ward's Impreza sharing third with Dave Hornbrook/Ann Forster's Mitsubishi Lancer E9.

With Farrar quickest on stage two, he moved up to joint second with Renshaw, but the latter picked up a 30-second penalty for a wrong route, dropping him to ninth.

By half distance Pawson was 17s clear of Farrar, as Hornbrook tied for third with Alistair Hutchinson/St John Dykes' Renault Clio Campus.

Having topped the on the next three stages Pawson had built his advantage to 26s. But Farrar was more concerned over retaining his hold on runners-up spot after Class 4 winner Hutchinson ousted Hornbrook on stage seven and he was only two seconds shy of taking second place on the last stage.

Hornbrook retained a solid fourth, with Craig/Renshaw's Impreza snatching fifth from Miles Taylor/Cameron Young's Impreza on the last stage.

Marina Miller/Ian Davidson's Nissan Micra was unopposed in Class 1. In Class 2, it was plain sailing for Adi Collins/Jon Hudson's Micra.

After mechanical woes claimed Chris Platt/Mick Robinson's Vauxhall Tigra, James Evans/Ffion Davies topped Class 3 in their Fiesta R2.

Allan McDowall/James Robson's Opel Kadett won Class 5, and in the concurrent Junior Rally, only 0.10s split daylong leaders Archie Swinscoe/Barry Young's from Lewis Hooper/Sam Bilham's Micra.

Pawson and Wride were untroubled on their way to Yorkshire glory

Results
Organiser: North Humberside NC **When:** May 30 **Where:** Melbourne Nr York **Championships:** Alpha Concrete ANEMMC, Clubman Motorsport EMAMC, ANWCC, Yokohama Tyres Senior F1000, F1000 Junior **Stages:** 10 **Starters:** 44.
1 Steve Pawson/Graham Wride (Subaru Impreza) 33m38s; 2 Martin Farrar/Andy Ward (Subaru Impreza) +27s; 3 Alistair Hutchinson/St John Dykes (Renault Clio Campus); 4 Dave Hornbrook/Ann Forster (Mitsubishi E9); 5 Craig Renshaw/Steve Renshaw (Impreza); 6 Miles Taylor/Cameron Young (Impreza); 7 Mark Mazzitelli/Liam Mazzitelli (Ford Escort Mk2); 8 Jonathan Lightbody/Dane Chapman (Impreza); 9 David Longfellow/Daniel Ward (Mitsubishi E9); 10 Allan McDowall/James Robson (Opel Kadett). **Class winners:** Marina Miller/Ian Davidson (Nissan Micra); Adi Collins/Jon Hudson (Micra); James Evans/Ffion Davies (Ford Fiesta R2); Hutchinson/St Dykes. **Junior Rally:** Archie Swinscoe/Barry Young (Skoda Citigo).

RED DRAGON STAGES: BY IAN HARDEN — MAY 29

NICHOLLS AND BROOM WAIT FOR ONE WIN – AND THEN TWO COME ALONG

Will Nicholls and co-driver Nick Broom took their second rally win in less than a month at the Red Dragon IT Stages.

Staying mechanically trouble-free throughout 10 long, tough stages, the Ford Fiesta R5+ pairing took the lead from early pacesetters Rob Dennis / Andrew Boswell on SS4 and were never headed thereafter.

As Down Ampney's notoriously slippery surface caused numerous spins and overshoots throughout the field of 75 starters, Nicholls's only indiscretion was one spin on SS2; he went on to set eight consecutive fastest stage times, pulling clear to win by 1m32s.

Second-placed Dennis set a fierce pace early on, his prototype Skodaru Fabia handling particularly well in the twister parts of the stages.

Having conceded the lead to Nicholls he continued to push hard, fending off the twin challenges of Simon Mansell / Shaun Layland and Stefan Davies / Daniel Petrie.

Despite a time-consuming overshoot on the final stage, he held determinedly on to runner-up spot.

Mansell / Layland drove strongly all day to take third, in their second rally together. Their three-litre, rear-wheel drive Ford Escort Mk4 held off Davies / Petrie's Ford Escort Mk2 by 29 seconds after a tough scrap for over-two litre class honours.

Results
Red Dragon IT Stages Rally **Organiser:** EMCOS **When:** May 29 **Where:** Down Ampney, Glos **Championships:** Cotswold MSG Stage Rally, AWMMC Heart of England, WAMC Welsh Tarmacadam **Stages:** 10 **Starters:** 77.
1 Will Nicholls/Nick Broom (Ford Fiesta R5+) 1h 23m 31s; 2 Rob Dennis/Andrew Boswell (Skoda Fabia Proto) +1m 32s; 3 Simon Mansell/Shaun Layland (Ford Escort G4); 4 Stefan Davies/Daniel Petrie (Escort Mk2); 5 Gary Thomas/Linda Thomas (Escort Mk2); 6 Wayne Lloyd/William Lloyd (Escort Mk2); 7 Richard Merriman/Kathryn Curzon (Darrian T90); 8 Tim Freeman/Paul Williams (Escort Mk2); 9 Steve Hopewell/Paul Smith (Escort Mk2); 10 Peter Hedges/James Hedges (Escort Mk2). **Class winners:** Stephen Pritchard/Dan Evans (Nova SR); Matt Wood/Val Thompson (Corsa B GSi); Lloyd/Lloyd; Mansell/Layland; Nicholls/Broom.

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RACING REPORTS

Photos: Gary Hawkins

BRANDS HATCH: MSVR BY RACHEL HARRIS-GARDINER — MAY 29-30

Thomas and Lockie's Falcon was victorious

James Cottingham was patient in his chase for Gentleman Drivers success in his Cobra

THOMAS AND LOCKIE ADD TO THEIR 2021 SUCCESSES

Tin-tops provided some of the most exciting action at this weekend's Brands Hatch Masters.

Julian Thomas's Ford Falcon was the worthy winner of an exciting and surprising Pre '66 Touring Cars race, driven by Thomas himself and Calum Lockie. They were helped by the retirements of early leader Henry Mann (Ford Mustang) and the Mustang of Rob Fenn and Jake Hill, which also led until problems with fuel lines and transmission intervened.

Still, Thomas had his fair share of trials and slid on some oil shortly after Mann's disappearance, losing two places to Fenn and David Coyne's Mustang. Coyne kept in touch with the leaders to finish second, ahead of the Lotus Cortina of Roy Alderslade and fourth further Cortinas behind it.

Former British Touring Car Championship racer Jeff Smith was expected to triumph in the Pre '66 Minis, but he had newcomer Nathan Heathcote to contend with. Ian Curley took advantage of the novelty factor to win twice, but Heathcote led for portions of both races and was second in the first one. He could have won race two but had to retire with a loose wheel. Smith was third in race one and crashed out of race two on the opening lap.

Sportscars were not to be outdone either. Alex Brundle triumphed in the Historic Sportscar race in Gary Pearson's Lola T70, despite a penalty for making his pitstop too early. Brundle was one of eight drivers censured after a string of cars dived into the pitlane during a safety car period, a couple of minutes before the window opened. Among them was Tom Bradshaw's Chevron B19, which had been Brundle's nearest rival until a throttle cable snapped. Martin Stretton was second in Nick Sleep's T70, having put in a burst of speed after taking over the car.

Gentlemen Drivers was also a real highlight. James Cottingham won in his Shelby Cobra after waiting quietly for an opening, which came after erstwhile leader Oliver Bryant had to retire his Cobra with gearbox trouble 10 minutes from the end.

Alex Brundle and John Pearson were second in Pearson's E-type, which led the field early. The Andrew Jordan/Roy Alderslade Cobra Daytona Coupe also had its turn at the front, but dropped down the order with gear problems. Tiff Needell and John Spiers were third in a TVR Griffith, having played the waiting game too.

RACE WINNERS

Historic Formula 1
Race 1 & 2: Steve Hartley (McLaren MP4/1)

Equipe Libre
Race 1 & 2: Tom Smith (MGB)

Masters Endurance Legends
Race 1 & 2: Steve Tandy (Lola-Judd B12/60)

Masters Pre '66 Touring Cars
Julian Thomas/Calum Lockie (Ford Falcon)

Gentlemen Drivers
James Cottingham (Shelby Cobra)

Masters Historic Sportscars
Alex Brundle (Lola T70)

Masters Pre '66 Minis
Race 1 & 2: Ian Curley (Austin Mini Cooper S)

DONINGTON PARK: CSCC BY MARCUS PYE — MAY 29-30

BELL AND FERGUSON ARE KINGS OF THE SWINGERS

Photo: Mick Walker

Ferguson and Bell (23) topped the Swinging '60s fight

Tom Bell and Joe Ferguson danced clear of a brilliant five-Mini scrap, besting Ralph and Charlie Budd in Group 1 as sensational Swinging '60s races were the cream of CSCC's Donington crop.

Simeon Chodosh in his thuggish Chevrolet Corvette repelled Steve Hodges' Lotus 7 in an almighty Group 2 dust-up. Both were penalised for rejoining before the mandated two-minute pitstops were served, thus Malcolm Johnson – after several excursions – was declared winner.

Wayne Crabtree won the first two Special Saloon & Modsports races, but his Subaru-powered Ford RS200 clone expired in the finale, leaving Malcom Harding a maiden victor in his stunning Smith & Jones-engined Escort Mk2, shadowed by Joe Ward's legendary Baby Bertha.

Mark Chilton aced Future Classics, narrowly beating Aston and Tony Blake's TVR Tuscan. Jamie Boot was unrivalled in Classic K.

Stonking BMWs won Saturday's New Millennium and Open events. Darren Fielding (E46 GTR) took the former after Mark Wyatt faded in the Interceptor E92 in which Russell Humphrey led. Matty Evans' V8-engined 1M Coupe triumphed over Michael Pensavalle's E46 M3 in the Open.

Despite being clattered during lappery at Redgate, Evans looked to have doubled-up in the Slicks Series, but a two-second penalty for a short pitstop dropped him behind Nigel Jenkins, whose Ferrari lost its rear bumper in a first corner melee which derailed poleman Kevin Jones' Noble.

Junior rally convert Tom Delaney led the Turbo Tin Tops brilliantly, but was denied a debut victory when a sensor put his BMW Mini Cooper S RS6 into limp mode. He finished third behind Carl Chambers and John Hammersley, censured for skittling Charlie Newton-Darby's Mini R53 into the Old Hairpin gravel during lappery.

John Cutmore topped both Magnificent Sevens bouts. A spinning Tim Davis took out BOSS team-mate Colin Watson while essaying to grab the opener's lead. A short stop penalty then undid Jonny Pittard's first win glory, leaving him ninth. Pittard was catching Cutmore when the sequel finished under caution.

A 30-second success delay for Tin Top victory at Thruxton looked just beyond Andrew Windmill until Nigel Tongue (Peugeot 306) tripped leader Martin Addison (106) up, having already attracted a pit penalty.

RACE WINNERS

Magnificent Sevens
Races 1&2: John Cutmore (Spire-Suzuki RB7)

New Millennium/ Modern Classics
Darren Fielding (BMW E46 M3 GTR)

Open Series
Matty Evans (BMW 1M Coupe)

Tin Tops
Andrew Windmill (Honda Civic Type R)

Turbo Tin Tops
Carl Chambers (Peugeot 208 GTi)

Slick Series
Nigel Jenkins (Ferrari 458 Challenge)

Special Saloons and Modsports
Races 1 & 2: Wayne Crabtree (Ford RS200-Subaru);
Race 3: Malcolm Harding (Ford Escort Mk2)

Classic K
Jamie Boot (TVR Griffith)

Swinging '60s Group 2
Malcolm Johnson (Lotus Europa)

Swinging '60s Group 1
Tom Bell/Joe Ferguson (Austin Cooper S)

Future Classics
Mark Chilton (Nissan Skyline GT-R R32)

KIRKISTOWN: 500MRCI BY RICHARD YOUNG — MAY 29

FIESTAS STEAL THE SHOW AT KIRKISTOWN'S RETURN

Photo: Roy Dempster

Stewart was made to work for Ford Fiesta Zetec victory

Warm sunshine and some equally heated on-track action marked the return of racing to Northern Ireland after the long lockdown.

And while fields weren't exactly massive, there was enough close racing to entertained the small race-starved crowd 500MRCI, with members only allowed to attend.

The closest contests of the day involved Fiesta Zetecs, with Mark Stewart and Neville Anderson scoring one victory and one second place apiece. What was impressive was the fact that the combined race times (unofficial) would have given an aggregate win to Stewart by 0.7 seconds after half an hour of cut-and-thrust racing.

In the concurrent Mazda MX-5 encounters, the wins went to Paul Sheridan in race one and newcomer Gregory McMillan in race two.

Jordan Dempsey (Van Diemen RF00) won the first FF1600 race after a fight for second between David McCullough (Van Diemen RF01) and Alan Davidson (Mondiale M89S). Davidson snatched the place at Colonial on lap four only to spin, and be collected by the Ray of Neville Smyth, the latter making his race return after several years away.

At the restart. Dempsey managed to keep McCullough at bay all the way to the flag but any hopes of a repeat victory were quashed when the red Van Diemen pulled off after just four laps of race two leaving McCullough to cruise to victory. Ryan Campbell's Reynard took the runner-up spot.

Elsewhere on the programme there were double victories for Jim Larkham (Radical) in Roadsports and Ciaran Denvir (Civic) in a poorly supported saloon encounter.

RACE WINNERS

Formula Ford 1600
Race 1: Jordan Dempsey (Van Diemen RF00); **Race 2:** David McCullough (Van Diemen RF01)

Mazda MX-5
Race 1: Paul Sheridan; **Race 2:** Gregory McMillan

Fiesta Zetec
Race 1: Mark Stewart; **Race 2:** Neville Anderson

Saloon GT
Races 1 & 2: Ciaran Denvir (Honda Civic)

Roadsport
Races 1 & 2: Jim Larkham (Radical PR06)

WHAT'S ON

YOUTUBE

Imagine scoring points on your Formula 1 debut, and doing so at your (and your gregarious team boss's) home race and in an age when only the top six scored. And doing so in a Minardi, long thought tail-of-field fodder, and one that you had to nurse for much of the way. And with only a brief Valencia test as your experience of the car. Oh, and you also had to overcome a 34.9-second pitstop due to a fuel-flap problem.

Our readers' Q&A guest this week Mark Webber did all this, in 2002's Australian Grand Prix (aided admittedly by eight cars being removed in a first-corner smash). And F1's YouTube channel offers a close look at its dramatic crescendo with fifth-placed Webber hunted by Mika Salo's Toyota. Webber would score even if passed, but the prize money difference between fifth and sixth was $25million…

There's plenty of onboard footage, particularly from Webber's rear-view, and none of it is interrupted by commentary. Instead it's the sound of the V10s and of the passionate Australian onlookers (both of which are considerable). Plus we see a cheeky podium visit.

You can watch it all at: youtube.com/watch?v=E7-g_NkXNBI or by searching: 'Rookie Dream Debut For Mark Webber! | 2002 Australian Grand Prix'.

Graham Keilloh

TV GUIDE

Formula 1's latest round is upon us and it's another street venue, and a rather different one to Monaco. Yes, F1 goes back to Baku (sorry) for the Azerbaijan Grand Prix.

And it comes with the usual coverage from Channel 4 and Sky Sports F1. The former's qualifying highlights are at 1730hrs-1900hrs on Saturday and its race highlights are 1730hrs-2000hrs on Sunday.

While Sky Sports F1's coverage once again kicks off with The F1 Show on Thursday at 1500hrs-1600hrs (and it's repeated later) followed by the drivers' press conference at 1600hrs-1730hrs. Ted Kravitz's notebooks are here too, with the qualifying version at 1830hrs-1900hrs on Saturday and the race one on 1600hrs-1630hrs on Sunday. Both also get repeated plenty.

Back to Baku: More F1

The World Rally Championship is back with Rally Italy and, as well as the live offerings, day one's best bits are at 2300hrs-2330hrs on BT Sport 2 on Friday, day two's are on BT Sport 3 at 2330hrs-0000hrs on Saturday and day three's are on BT Sport 3 at 2030hrs-2100hrs on Sunday. All three also are repeated often.

Monday on BT Sport 2 is also a good day for motorsport highlights, with Extreme E, Asian Le Mans Series, DTM, V8 Supercars and WRC all shown.

Graham Keilloh

LIVE TV

FORMULA 1 AZERBAIJAN GRAND PRIX BAKU

- **Practice 1:** Friday, 0900hrs-1045hrs, Sky Sports F1
- **Practice 2:** Friday, 1245hrs-1430hrs, Sky Sports F1
- **Practice 3:** Saturday, 0945hrs-1110hrs, Sky Sports F1
- **Qualifying:** Saturday, 1200hrs-1430hrs, Sky Sports F1
- **Race:** Sunday, 1130hrs-1600hrs (start time 1300hrs), Sky Sports F1

FORMULA 2, BAKU

- **Practice:** Friday, 0720hrs-0815hrs, Sky Sports F1
- **Qualifying:** Friday, 1125hrs-1205hrs, Sky Sports F1
- **Sprint race 1:** Saturday, 0815hrs-0920hrs, Sky Sports F1
- **Sprint race 2:** Saturday, 1430hrs-1535hrs, Sky Sports F1
- **Feature race:** Sunday, 0935hrs-1055hrs, Sky Sports F1

WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP RALLY ITALY

- **SS9:** Saturday, 0700hrs-0800hrs, BT Sport 3
- **SS18:** Sunday, 0730hrs-0830hrs, BT Sport 1
- **SS20:** Sunday, 1100hrs-1230hrs, BT Sport 1

NASCAR, SONOMA

- **Race:** Sunday, 2030hrs-0100hrs, Premier Sports 1

LISTINGS

SATURDAY

Oulton Park, Cheshire

MSVR meeting: Sports 2000, Racing Saloons/Production BMW and Golf, Lotus Elise, Production GTi, Z Cars/New Generation BMW **Starts** racing from 1140hrs (qualifying from 0830hrs) **Admission** adult £14, under 13 free **Web** msv.com **Contact** 0843 453 9000 **Advance tickets only**

SATURDAY/SUNDAY

Cadwell Park, Lincs

HSCC Wolds Trophy: Historic FF1600, Classic FF1600/Heritage FF1600, Historic FF2000/Classic FF2000, 70s Road Sports/80s Production, Historic Road Sports, Historic F3, Classic Clubmans, Formula Junior **Starts** Saturday, racing from 1330hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs) Sunday, racing from 1020hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs) **Admission** adult £14, under 13 free **Web** msv.com **Contact** 0843 453 9000 **Advance tickets only**

Brands Hatch, Kent

Truck meeting: Trucks, Legends, Minis, Intermarque Silhouettes, Kumho BMW, Pickups, MGOC, 2CV **Starts** Saturday, racing from 1105hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs) Sunday, racing from 1115hrs (qualifying from 1000hrs) **Admission** adult £25, under 13 free **Web** msv.com **Contact** 0843 453 9000 **Advance tickets only**

Snetterton, Norfolk

MSVR meeting: GT Cup, Porsche Club, Clubmans, Toyo Tyres 7s **Starts** Saturday, racing from tba (qualifying from 0900hrs) Sunday, racing from tba (qualifying from 0900hrs) **Admission** adult £14, under 13 free **Web** msv.com **Contact** 0843 453 9000 **Advance tickets only**

SUNDAY

Knockhill, Fife

SMRC meeting: FF1600, Northern Sports/Saloons, Classic Sports and Saloons, Mini Cooper, Mini Cooper S, Fiesta ST, C1 Cup **Starts** racing from 1100hrs (qualifying from 0900hrs) **Admission** adult £15, **Web** knockhill.com **Advance tickets only**

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ART EDITOR MIKE STOKOE'S FAVOURITE OF THE WEEK!

Editor Matt James's recent trip to Arlington Stadium

Neil Ormston's pic of FF1600 drama

Gary Hill captured a British GT moment

Yvan Muller (l) battling, by David Harbey

A beauty, by 11-year-old Ben Lawrence

NEXT WEEK

OUT THURSDAY, JUNE 10

*Correct at time of going to press

BRITISH RALLY SEASON OPENS IN STYLE

We reflect on the BRC curtain raiser from Cheshire

THE NEWEST HOT ROD RACER

We get under the skin of NHR's newest toy

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